

**IT CAN HAPPEN  
BETWEEN SUNDAYS**

**A RADIANT MIDWEEK SERVICE**

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# It Can Happen "Between Sundays

A RADIANT MIDWEEK SERVICE

*By*

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IN affectionate gratitude, this book is  
dedicated to the officers, members, and  
friends of the West Medford Baptist  
Church, West Medford, Massachusetts.

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## Chapter I

### THE HOUR STRIKES FOR US

IS IT possible for us in our day to recapture the spiritual appeal and sustaining power of the prayer and fellowship meeting, as experienced by the apostolic church?

It will be recalled that in the beginning the Master trained his disciples to use and develop the priceless values of communion with the Father and fellowship one with another. It was not by chance that he prayed in the presence of the Twelve. Nor do we wonder that "as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray."

So well did he teach them that they remembered and passed on to others the very words that he gave them. Then what a wonderful prayer and fellowship meeting he had with his disciples just before he left them for Gethsemane, when he prayed for them: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one." A little later, another meeting of "prayer and supplication" was held at Jerusalem in "an upper room." This lasted many days. The apostles and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brethren were there. We like to think of that meeting as the time and place where the church was born. If that be so, can the church of today live and grow without prayer and fellowship meetings?

Echoes of prevailing, victorious prayers of the apostolic church, voiced "with one accord," can yet be heard by the person who listens as with the ears of the soul. Prayer meetings in the early days of the church were not formal,

aimless gatherings. Threats of imprisonment and even death could not prevent those of the "way" from coming together to pray and worship. There was preaching then—lay preaching—but prayer was the Christian's recognized approach to the source of power. The early church knew from daily experience that "prayer changes things." For this reason, prayer and fellowship meetings continued, the church advanced, and there were *gathered day by day those that were being saved*. Prayer in secret was urged and practiced, but this was not accepted as a substitute for group prayer.

The day came, however, when stately services of worship—with splendid music and eloquent sermons—gained the chief place, with the inevitable result that the simple fellowship gathering for praise and prayer was seriously neglected. Due to this change of emphasis, the midweek service in many churches in our day has either been given up entirely or allowed to become a struggling, ineffective, dutiful form that has lost its power.

There is little to be gained by any attempt to summarize the causes for the decline of this once splendid meeting. Moreover, ours must be a forward look. We believe the hour has struck—clear as a bell—for the revival of the potent, power-filled prayer and fellowship gathering in every evangelical church in America. We think this is definitely in keeping with the expressed will of our Lord. We rejoice in our Sunday worship services and pray these may possess greater power of a victorious character. The richer the music and the greater the pulpit utterances, the more will we praise God. But these can never take the place of the week-night gathering. In fact, there can be no "just as good" substitute for the midweek service in which all those present may take part. It would be well for us to learn, or relearn,

that it is not a case of either the Sunday service or the midweek gathering, when both are necessary. These two meetings, in many respects wholly different in character and purpose, are not competitive but supplementary. The one can and should be made to strengthen and enrich the other. Indeed they may be thought of as a great spiritual team.

If the question is asked as to some of the special contributions that the week-night service can make, the answer should include at least four recognized values:

*Fellowship.* There is an imperative demand for Christian fellowship. This need is constant and peculiarly essential to Christian growth in our day. Followers of Christ are strengthened, inspired, and stimulated through this regular opportunity for "rubbing elbows" in spiritual comradeship. Courage is revived, vision is cleared, faith cultured, and sorrow overcome. The service between Sundays can be of a character to meet the Christian's daily want more effectively than the Sunday worship. The informal religious fellowship is naturally productive of a happy and normal development.

*Deepened Devotion.* Few people would seriously consider the possibility of passing a full week without eating. Physical fitness makes the taking of frequent nourishment absolutely imperative. Likewise, healthy spiritual life is contingent upon partaking regularly of the things of God. From one Sunday to another Sunday is a long time to keep the "inner man," as Paul called it, renewed and radiant without replenishment.

As much as we dislike to make the admission, the truth is that the average church member fails to carry on daily individual devotions. Obviously, the Sunday morning worship, however rich and helpful, is not adequate to maintain Kingdom values in the experience of the rank and file of

people. Folks become so busy, there are so many places to go, that it is not strange that the soul's strength cannot "carry over" from Sunday to Sunday.

Hence, there is constant need for a genuine *revival* of "faith, hope, love" at a vital, radiant midweek meeting. What rain is to the famished field, what food is to the hungry man, the ministry of a glowing week-night service can be to those who seek to grow into the likeness of Christ.

*Biblical Knowledge.* Undoubtedly, the Bible is the "world's best seller." We do not question the truth of this oft-repeated statement; indeed, we rejoice in this gracious fact. However, this does not assure us of a proportionate increase in knowledge of God's Word. The waters in a life-giving spring may be most abundant, overflowing the sides, but these will serve no good end unless people drink. The mere sale of the Bible is not enough; people must be brought to "feed on the bread of life," must come to know what is meant by "Thus saith the Lord." Available evidence indicates a striking anomaly—more Bibles are sold, yet less Bible reading and study is actually done.

We believe, however, there is a new and growing conviction that it is absolutely necessary for us to extend our knowledge of the Bible. One of the great national religious bodies in a recent session included the following among its most vital resolutions: "Whereas, there is an appalling ignorance of the English Bible, be it resolved that pastors and leaders seek to restore the Bible to a larger place of influence in our church life . . . by a more exalted use of the Bible in the prayer-room."

The writer has been amazed at the enthusiasm shown by many people as intensive Bible study has been carried on in the week-night meeting. In his experience, nothing can

approach this kind of meeting in genuine and long-sustained interest. The one who may be tempted to question the validity of this assertion is dared to put it to a fair and actual test.

*Evangelistic and Missionary Inspiration.* We shall not be far wrong in saying that evangelistic and missionary passion was born in a fellowship prayer meeting. It was from that "upper room" after Pentecost that the Spirit-filled, zealous followers of Christ went out as flaming witnesses for the Master in "Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The place and occasion where Christians have received such power must be given supreme emphasis. Whenever and wherever as many as 5 per cent of the membership of any church shall gather regularly in these weekly prayer and fellowship gatherings, souls will be won to the Lord Jesus, both at home and in the faraway corners of the earth. Seemingly insurmountable obstacles will be overcome. It is difficult to understand how so great and glorious a fact as this can be overlooked by any one of the churches.

We are sure that, after carefully reviewing these commanding factors, it must become a conviction that the successful church is mightily challenged to maintain an efficient midweek gathering. This is by no means a plea for the return of the traditional prayer meeting as many remember it, however valuable that may have been in its day. If tradition and respect for a type of meeting that has served its purpose were the only consideration, this would not be an adequate warrant for the service between Sundays. But the need is present and vital, the opportunity real, and the call clarion clear.

Undoubtedly, there must be an almost startling change of

pattern or technique. The passing of time brings new requirements. Methods which were potent fifty years ago will seldom work effectively today. An attempt, however sincere and earnest, to conduct the week-night service in the way that was acceptable in grandfather's day—or even that of father's time—is likely to prove unappealing and disappointing.

In the brief chapters which follow, plans and methods will be suggested that can be adapted to churches of every size and character, techniques by which a large degree of success may be achieved. Every plan put forth has passed the pragmatic test. It should be noted, however, that these are not automatic in their operation but must be worked faithfully and persistently. They will bring abundant success when used by the pastor who has learned to direct by the fine art of indirection.

## Chapter II

### A NEW NAME

THERE is much in a name!

Words are symbols, their greatest value inherent in their symbolic or pictorial import. Words are vehicles by the use of which we arrive at definite mental and spiritual destinations. "M-o-t-h-e-r" is vastly more than a word of six letters, for the instant we see that term we visualize the richest and most precious of all human friends.

Because words are symbolic and since they do compel a person to pass readily and quickly from certain letter formations to specific thought forms, one can easily understand that names are pregnant with vital significance. A name will greatly enhance or stoutly hinder persons, places and programs. A name will frequently mark the difference between success and failure, between victory and defeat.

The old proverb has it that "A person with a bad name is already half-hanged." A meeting with a poor name, with a name which is indicative of a weak and unattractive program, labors from the start under a needless and heavy handicap. The ancient man of wisdom said, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." Of course that declaration had to do with individuals, but certainly it applies in part to any gathering of a Christian church.

"Time makes ancient good uncouth," according to the poet. Rightly interpreted, this pronouncement is true. This fact is quite generally recognized throughout the social order. Only two or three generations ago, little girl babies were called "Mehetabel," "Jerusha," "Samantha," and other

similar names. But few and far between are parents who would inflict such names upon their children today. Yesterday it was "the undertaker," but today the better term is "the mortician." No longer is the specialist in foods merely "a cook"; she is a "dietitian." The "astronomer" of a decade ago has evolved into an "astrophysicist." These are typical illustrations taken at random which prove the reality of the law of change.

It should be remembered that thought-forms, names, and methods are valuable only so long as they serve the needs of humanity. One of the most dangerous types of idolatry is that which betrays itself in the phrase, "We never did it that way!" The new is not to be sought simply because it is new, but to find and utilize that which will minister most adequately to the requirements of society.

Names have changed in keeping with the demands of the new age, but the essential character of personality and service remains the same. Were it necessary to call a rose by some other name, its perfume would remain unaltered. This is a factor of no mean importance for the mid-week service of the future. For many, many years the generally accepted name for the mid-week service was the prayer meeting. Beyond question that met the need over a long period, but it must be said, kindly but emphatically, that this name can no longer serve effectively. To make this declaration is neither heresy nor lack of genuine appreciation. Time marches on! Whether we like it or not, change is inevitable. For one to oppose stubbornly this inexorable law is as futile as for a man to attempt lifting himself by his own bootstraps.

But, why give up this time-honored name—The Prayer Meeting? This question is natural and fair. The title is to be laid aside reverently and with regret because of its

too obvious connotation. It savors of antiquity, of old-fashioned and quite outmoded plans and programs, of "horse-and-buggy days." Rightly or otherwise, it brings to mind images of a small, semi-lighted room, a mere handful of the saints of the church, long prayers, and even longer testimonies and exhortations, the substance of which was almost exactly the same week after week. In the old order, scant consideration was given to children and youth; the meeting was planned for the edification of adults. Certainly with such misunderstanding and short-sightedness attached to the past of the prayer meeting, no church can hope, without a sweeping change, to make its mid-week service of the future effective.

The proposal to give this gathering a new name should not cause serious difficulty for any church if results are sought. The Lord Jesus did not hesitate to do seeming violence to many details in the prevailing religious order in "the days of His flesh." He stripped away the dead husks of formalism that the people might have opportunity to feed upon the living grain. Once a name had lost its richness of meaning, he refused to consider it sacredly imperative. He set small store by ancient shibboleths which had outlived their days of usefulness. The church which would maintain a vital, helpful service between Sundays in the future must willingly, gladly follow the Master's example in this regard.

What shall be chosen for a name? Here no specifics can be offered. Uniformity is both undesirable and impossible. That which will suit one community may fail utterly in another. However, there are some general points to be observed. The name chosen should be packed with fascination, comprehensiveness, and promise. It must be up-to-date in that it reflects the Christian spirit in the modern

age. The name must be considered in relation to the entire parish—children, youth, and adults. No special group is to be favored in this particular. The service between Sundays which we have in mind will attract and be blessed by an attendance of youth equal to, if not exceeding, that of adults. Care must be exercised in the selection of the name, since the one decided upon will be used for many years to come—until it becomes apparent that another change is advisable.

We suggest that a fairly large committee, in which every organization is represented, be charged with the responsibility and opportunity of deciding upon the new name. Usually this group can, after due deliberation, come to unanimous agreement. This accomplished, it will not be difficult to "sell" the name to the church. The preacher will be extremely unwise who, having caught the vision, chooses the new designation and then tries to "cram it down the throat" of his church. Such procedure—however appropriate the name chosen by the pastor—will bring unpleasant things to pass! But, why hurry this matter? Rome was not built in a day. If the rose opens naturally, it will be beautiful, but when human hands persist in rushing the process, only a mutilated blossom results. Happy is the minister who has learned the fine art of directing by indirection—he is the man who makes the largest contribution to the cause of the Kingdom.

With these generalizations made, we would list a few names for this service between Sundays which may lend themselves actually or suggestively to pastors who wish to exercise leadership in this new venture. Some of these are already being used advantageously.

*Church Night.* This suggests the comprehensiveness of the service in that the words at least include and challenge the entire church, not merely "the faithful few." This is also indicative of a varied program.

*The Happy Hour.* Here the joyous element is emphasized, a note which many think not only desirable but imperative. Life has many shadows and sorrows. Christian faith should be synonymous with profound and lasting joy.

*The Family Night.* We like this especially because it includes and seems to expect the entire family group—except tiny tots—to attend the fellowship meeting. Any agency which serves, or seeks to serve, the well-being of the family is of profound value. This name grips the imagination; surely it is worthy of careful consideration.

*The Fellowship Night.* This title obviously embodies the primary purpose for a between-Sundays service. Hearts are hungry for happy, wholesome, unhurried fellowship.

*The Friendship Hour.* Friendships are among life's greatest imperatives. Few names actually appeal more to the average person than this. If this name is chosen, its implications must be carried out—actually. The writer chanced to attend a worship service in a church of the Middle West which claimed to specialize in friendship. Just one person even "threatened" to speak to the stranger. Apparently the people of that church—at least a majority of them—were reasonably friendly among themselves, but the stray visitor was quite overlooked.

*The Food, Faith, and Fun Night.* This name is self-explanatory. It advertises a supper period and games with the devotional service sandwiched between them. No one

can question the attractiveness of such a manifold gathering, but it involves prodigious preparation, probably larger than most churches can carry through regularly. However, this very feature has inherent strength in that more people "given jobs" will find more people interested in the endeavor.

*The Sanctuary Service.* This name for the between-Sundays service was probably coined by Dr. William L. Stidger, who used it because attendance upon the mid-week service required the use of the sanctuary. Since we believe Dr. Stidger's experience in this regard to have been unique, we do not commend this emphasis overmuch. Such a service would tend to follow too closely the Sunday morning worship pattern and not enough the idea and ideal of fellowship.

During the past decade the mid-week service in the church served by the writer has been known as *The Glad Service*. It still works, it has successfully passed the pragmatic test, and apparently there are no signs of lessening efficiency. When it was proposed that we change the name, some good and sincere people offered objections. They felt themselves untrue to sacred traditions should they give favorable consideration for even a second. The idea was then allowed to "simmer," with the result that the change was brought about harmoniously. Probably there were those who felt the departure to be ill-advised, and possibly some few secretly expected the venture would fail. However, experience of ten years has proved the wisdom of the change of name. *The Glad Service* is known in every part of our city, as well as in wider circles. No person in the far-flung parish ever thinks of calling it other than *The Glad Service*.

For this service we have a motto which is in keeping with

the name: "The Price of Admission is a Smile: If You Lack the Price, We'll Give It to You." This is simple, but it works.

Underlying this weekly gathering is the Christian philosophy of genuine gladness. This is not the superficial, eye-blinding happiness but the firm belief that those who keep in intimate, continuous contact with God in Christ will possess the Master's joy, the joy which the world can neither give nor take away. Upon this firm foundation, we build the structure and superstructure of praise, prayer, profession; people come to share and go away strengthened in body, mind, and soul. It is not difficult to see what a tremendous impetus such a program gives to interest in and attendance upon the Sunday worship, as well as to the entire life of the individual.

By all odds, let the forward-looking church give the service between Sundays a new name and make that name fascinating, comprehensive, and crowded with Christian promise and optimism. Remember—there is much in a name!

## Chapter III

### THE PASTOR AND HIS PART

SELDOM, if ever, does a river rise higher than its source. Likewise, it will prove a notable anomaly to discover a midweek service which truly goes and glows and grows without the wholehearted, intelligent, enthusiastic leadership of the pastor.

The minister is the headman, the key personality, in every activity of his church; this is especially true in relation to the service between Sundays. As a rule—isolated exceptions prove the rule—the pastor will have as good a midweek service as he expects and deserves.

Let us face facts frankly. Where the midweek service fails, it will be due largely to the low estimate which the minister himself places upon it or to his refusal to plan and execute its program as zealously as that of the Sunday worship. When either of these conditions exists, there is small hope for a successful service between Sundays.

Several clergymen were participating in a community banquet. The time came for the after-dinner speeches. One minister requested that he be allowed to speak first. He prefaced his remarks with apologetic words after this fashion: "Thanks for permitting me to speak out of turn. You see, this is my prayer-meeting night, and I must be at the church in twenty minutes. It is with deep regret that I leave this festive occasion, especially since there will not be over fifteen or twenty people at my meeting, a service which in reality is not worth my time and attention." What an eloquent commentary of the estimate which that minister

placed upon the service. Of course, the gathering was little more than a travesty—its leader did not consider it worth while. That pastor got all he deserved. Since his expectations were meager, in no sense was he disappointed. There is an unerring law of compensations running through the universe. According to one's faith, achievements will be wrought.

The pastor who thoughtlessly relegates the midweek meeting to a place of secondary importance may as well discard it altogether. To consider this service an appendix is equivalent to a fruitless process of "going through the motions." The minister may evolve plans and make pulpit appeals for attendance, but if he does not honestly and deeply believe in the supreme spiritual significance of the service, he will have his labor for his pains. People are quick to penetrate veneer; they recognize sincerity and discount "play acting." Like responds to like, deep answers unto deep, and conversely. "If the pastor does not have faith in the midweek meeting, why should we?" is the logical question that the people ask. Of course, "the faithful few" will continue their splendid loyalty, but the larger number—the potential crowds—will not come.

"I am bitterly disappointed in my midweek service," said the pastor of a great church recently, "but I guess the fault is mine to a large degree, and this because I refuse to elevate the service to the level of our Sunday worship. My people generally think of this week-night gathering as being of third-rate importance—undoubtedly this is the result of my personal attitude." The frankness and logic of this man were commendable. He recognized the reason for a failing service, yet strangely enough he did not seek to overcome the difficulty. We wonder why?

Careful, candid consideration will convince the devoted,

clear-thinking pastor as to the abiding value, the unique significance of this service between Sundays. Only the blind of mind can fail in this discernment. With the coming of this vision, the minister will of necessity give this meeting a place in his plans equally as high as that of his Sunday worship. He will rightly expect great things from God through the midweek gathering, and this expectancy will compel him to work for the realization of these dreams. Such a minister's earnestness will be deep and genuine, and many people will respond to the challenge.

The pastor's efforts must have a psychological objective. It has been strikingly said that the minister must not only look earnestly to God, but he must also look intelligently at man. Just as truly as the successful advertisers must make a study of the mind of man and its processes and ways of working, must the pastor who would be successful, in the highest sense of the word, do so. If he really desires to accomplish the greatest results in securing the salvation of human nature, he must know human nature and adapt his methods to its idiosyncrasies. Relying on the Spirit's guidance and power, the gaining of the desired result is largely a question of *wise approach*.

The undershepherd who actually and deeply believes in the magnificent opportunity for spiritual culture presented by this meeting will continually impress on his people the truth that the midweek service is a great spiritual hour, so important as always to be kept inviolate. It goes without saying that no other meeting—of any sort or kind—should be held in the building during the time of this gathering. This should be insisted upon without exception.

In every announcement—pulpit, calendar, newspapers—*The Glad Service* of the church served by the writer is characterized as “the best service of the week; if you can

attend church but once during the week, choose this one." He speaks with utmost sincerity—there is a total absence of everything which savors of the dramatic. Some ministers challenge this emphasis, but experience proves their point not well taken, for one of the strongest incentives to attendance upon the Sunday worship is one's presence at *The Glad Service*.

Conversation with clergymen from various parts of the nation—pastors of churches small and large—leads to the conclusion that most ministers know something of the fellowship and spiritual possibilities of an effective service between Sundays, but there are few today who can or will make the necessary effort to insure a meeting which is truly "a going concern."

"Our midweek meeting is traditional," said the pastor of an urban church of something more than a thousand members. "The attendance," he continued, "is from forty to sixty, the latter figure representing our maximum strength in numbers. I am grateful it is not my personal responsibility—I already have far too much to do."

When asked about his service between Sundays, the minister of a church with well over fifteen hundred members frankly said, "Yes, we have one, such as it is; it does no harm, neither does it accomplish much that is constructive. It is no problem for me because I refuse to hold myself in any way responsible for its success. Whatever happens, it will go on just the same—no better, no worse." The wonder is not that such services as these fail, but that they have life enough to continue at all.

It is true that no pastor will ever "catch up" with all the manifold responsibilities of his office. Nevertheless, we are sure that in many instances a shift in emphasis, one which will bring the midweek service into its rightful "place in the

sun," is sure to result in pronounced spiritual progress without adding to the minister's heavy load. Possibly, if he were to relinquish his position on some of the outside committees—civic and denominational; to refuse a majority of the calls to speak here, there, and elsewhere; and to break the routine of being the "glorified chore boy" for the church, the pastor could direct the much needed and required energy to the conduct of a successful service between Sundays—and not increase the strain on his busy life.

Sporadic effort and scraps of time are not equivalent to "Open, Sesame." Consecrated, concentrated, continued effort is the requirement—for this no substitute can be discovered. The pastor more than any other person—more than any group of people—must think, plan, work, and pray. The dividends which accrue from this investment justify the expenditure, and the satisfaction which comes is not to be described with words.

Gladly we acknowledge and thank God for the leadership of the Holy Spirit. We would be more conscious of the profound truth of the pronouncement, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Divested of this limitless, eternal power, no service will succeed. But when this is said, it must also be stated that the attitude and personality of the minister will largely determine the atmosphere and the results of the midweek gathering. More than any other individual he will make or break the meeting. What a glorious responsibility! Faith, expectancy, optimism, enthusiasm—these attributes are positively contagious! People do, will, and should look up to their pastor as their example.

It should not be necessary to stress the minister's spiritual preparedness as one of the indispensable elements in making a midweek service successful in the highest sense. Continued

companionship with God in Christ insures fruitful fellowship with men. Perhaps the outstanding quality of the ancient prophets was their ability to say authoritatively, "Thus saith the Lord." They knew themselves to be spokesmen of the living Lord. Concerning this relation and responsibility they had not a vestige of doubt. Having been with God, having learned of him, and then having become recipients of the divine message for humanity, they went forth as aggressive, willing, certain voices of the Infinite. History seeks constantly to repeat itself in this regard.

In conducting the service, let the preacher be positive, potent, persuasive. His every movement must reflect confidence, assurance. This can only come through the knowledge that careful, thorough preparation has been made. We do not suggest a display of egotism, but an attitude of certainty which honest hard work has generated. We seldom give large loyalty to the guide who obviously falters, who seems to be undecided in his own mind. Confidence begets confidence, enthusiasm stimulates enthusiasm.

Let the minister throw himself unreservedly into every part of the service. "Things done by halves are never done right," or successfully. Let him be a leader who actually leads. Before long he will have a great midweek service on his hands as well as in his soul.

It should ever be remembered that "He who wears the spurs must win them." Wishful thinking, however noble of character, gains nothing until translated into definite action. The words of James are pertinent, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

## Chapter IV

### NEW METHODS FOR THE NEW DAY

TRUTH never changes, is subject to no law of mutability, but it requires new forms for expression with passing years. Unfortunately, this fact too often remains undiscovered; there is a marked tendency with succeeding generations, to champion old methods, to "do the same old thing in the same old way." This is particularly the case in religious activities. In church life we are afraid, seemingly, to launch out into the deep of practical experimentation in the matter of method. Apparently the fallacy has gained so large a place in our thinking that to try something different in Kingdom service is akin to sacrilege. The sooner this misconception is exploded the better. This clinging to outmoded ways and methods as characteristic of ecclesiastical forces is in sharp contrast to workers in other phases of our social order.

A few decades ago travel was largely by means of horse-back riding and stagecoach. These agencies were suited to the times, but at best slow and inefficient. Growing discontent, together with a willingness to advance, have brought results which stagger the imagination in motorcars, streamlined trains, and airplanes. The end is not yet—we wonder what it is to be. The worth and joy of travel have been marvelously enhanced; never have people traveled so far and fast as today. Yet nothing of value has been lost.

In the early days of American history communication was carried on by couriers. Revere and Dawes galloped their

willing steeds out of old Boston-town personally to "spread the alarm through every Middlesex village and farm" about the coming of the British. The Battle of New Orleans was fought after articles of peace had been signed, a grim illustration of the snail-like pace at which even the most important of information was delivered little over a century ago. Refusal to continue to be satisfied with this slow means of communication gradually became stronger, and today we have the telephone, telegraph, teletype, cable, and radio. What a remarkable transformation!

The church of the future will be alert to discover and to press forward in the use of methods which have a "cutting edge" for the new day. This must be so. To stand still is to stagnate. There should be an honest, eager attempt to employ means and methods which can produce the desired results. The question that ought continually to haunt any man responsible for the midweek service is, "Will it work?" It is not a case of clinging to ways and means which may be precious to the pastor or people, but of discovering and using plans which pulse with life. Methods which fail to pass the pragmatic test should be laid aside, however effective they may have been in former days.

This is not a plea for one to bow before any shrine marked "Methods." We are not interested in methods as such. As roads are means by which to *reach* desired ends, methods are simply agencies by which to *achieve* worthy aims. When better roads are built, by all means use them. Twenty-five years ago the writer found it necessary to travel 127 miles to reach his old home in an adjoining state. Today, thanks to new, better, and straighter roads, he can reach the same place by traveling exactly one hundred miles. There is no need to guess which route he travels. This principle applies with striking force to methods: when better ways are dis-

covered, they should be used. Any other conclusion is a violence to reason.

It is not enough to be conscious of the presence of the Holy Spirit. God will not do for a man what the man can do for himself. Nothing in the universe is more forward-looking, aggressive, and up-to-the-minute than the religion of Jesus Christ. God will not smile upon the man or the group who, characterized by indolence, fails either to discover or invent ways to achieve success in this service between Sundays. God has given brains, intelligence, to every normal person. He expects each man to use his wits. Failure to do this is inexcusable.

If memory serves correctly, the program of "the old-fashioned" prayer meeting included the singing of three hymns—never more nor less—which were of the most "solid" variety; the season of prayer, which as a rule meant a few long, stereotyped prayers; a message by the pastor, which savored strongly of theology and doctrine minus any illustrative material; and the testimony period, in which the tendency was for a few, "the regulars," to give extended statements, most of which sounded strangely familiar as they were given week after week. For a young person to attend was unusual. The few children present were to be seen, never heard. The program was as far removed from the reach of youth as one could imagine. It was definitely a meeting for adults.

We may agree that this plan had much to commend it then; people—at least, some of them—were strengthened for the days which stretched ahead. But we can assert that such procedure followed today and tomorrow will rather quickly destroy any potentially great midweek service. The spiritual essence can and must be retained, the methods must frequently be altered. No fact can be clearer.

Undoubtedly there are many preachers who are honest with themselves when they say, "The day of the successful, largely attended, week-night service has passed," not realizing that, with an adaptation of modern plans and methods, the best and richest days for the service between Sundays is either now or yet to be. There was a time when the farmer cut his hay with the hand scythe. Arising when "the stars were shining," he worked long and diligently. But today the mowing machine will accomplish more in one forenoon than ten men could do with scythes all day. Of course, the modern device means less work, shorter hours, greater efficiency. What of the preacher, however devoted and saintly, who attempts to use the methods which are so far out of date as to have no value save as exhibits of what "worked" many years ago?

One of the key words in the "going" midweek service of the future will surely be "variety." The finest program long continued becomes unattractive. No person can relish the same food served in the same way every day in the year. Uniformity dampens the keenest enthusiasm after a brief time. If every instrument in the orchestra were a violin, we would soon weary of the music. If every flower in the world were a rose—though it were an American Beauty—our appreciation of flowers would eventually reach the zero point. This is true with regard to any church service, but especially so concerning the midweek gathering. If you want to eliminate the meeting, just do the same thing in the same way at the same time every week. Variety is the spiritual spice of an effective week-night service.

Plans and programs, ways and methods, of the midweek meeting must not only be different in the main from those of former days, but they must be continually changing. Does this seem impossible? It is not. By ingenuity, observation,

and adaptation, it will be possible to give some new, attractive, and useful "twist" to the program every week. There is no yardstick sufficiently long to measure the psychological value and "lift" of constantly having something different "up your sleeve." This is of value both for the pastor and the people. There is positively no appeal here for one to develop that which is freakish. We have no interest in producing a "circus" or creating an entertainment. We recall a church in which the minister, gifted with strange, almost uncanny ability to gather a crowd, packed his church every Wednesday night for six or seven months. He became the talk of the town. His fame reached for miles in every direction. Great metropolitan papers began to "write him up." Seemingly he had gained access to the secret spring of successful week-night meetings. But like a rocket his brilliance soon died away, and within a year he *folded up his tents and silently stole away*. His forte was that of a traveling entertainer, not of a permanent, spiritual builder. People soon tire of theatrical performances, stunts, and material novelties. For a brief time the froth may appease, but it is soon learned that only the water of life can slack spiritual thirst.

No, we do not commend cheap, shoddy methods as a way to secure the crowds. Easy come, easy go! However, we do have the conviction, born of mature experience, that to succeed in the conduct of the week-night meeting, to bring folks nearer to each other and into closer fellowship with God, the service must be materially and spiritually attractive.

One of the most arresting and stimulating episodes recorded in the gospel story has to do with a fishing experience of the disciples. Addressing himself to these choice followers through Simon, the Master said, "Simon, launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught."

Typically, Peter made answer, "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing." Faithfully had they fished, worked as only trustworthy, skilled fishermen could work. Their efforts had been fruitless. Why fish any more, then, especially in the daytime—the hours of darkness were the time to fish! This was the logical line of reasoning. However, Peter was gladly subservient to the direction of his Lord, "Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net." And a great haul of fish was taken—taken because they dared to let down the net where to all practical intents and purposes there were no fish.

Out of this ancient record comes a stirring challenge to the pastor of every church. The "fishing" may have been poor—why try longer? The midweek service has faltered and failed. Like an obstinate motor it has sputtered, back-fired, and almost stalled. Why bother with it longer? Why not let the dead bury the dead and be done with the worry and work for all time? Why rack one's brain, suffer embarrassment, only to fail in the end? Then comes the Master's word, not merely of entreaty but of command: "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." Happy is the man who responds to that call, saying, ". . . We have toiled . . . and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net." Such men will never suffer the disappointment of empty nets.

Variations of program are possible in music, message, witnessing, praying, scriptural presentation, special "nights," and in other ways. In the pages which follow we shall suggest some of the ways by which one can be successfully different.

Time makes ancient good uncouth;  
They must upward still and onward,  
Who would keep abreast of truth.

## Chapter V

### THE SERVICE OF SONG

ONE of the most useful elements in a successful midweek service is praise, and praise is generally best implemented by music. The Pauline advice to those first-century Christians—"Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"—is quite pertinent today.

Music affords a most ready and practical means for Christian expression. In fact, Christianity is unique among the religions of earth in that its devotees sing. By the use of hymns and other suitable music the soul is ushered into the intimate presence of God. Hymns enable the soul to respond naturally to the love and goodness of the Infinite. Someone has well said, "Music is the child of religion, the companion of religion." This reminds us of Auerbach's forceful comment, "Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life."

Since the musical part of this meeting is impregnated with such vital importance, it commands and certainly should receive the pastor's diligent attention. What he says, as a rule, will not count as heavily as the music that is used. Wise is the minister who plans the music in keeping with its potential power. It will be helpful to make some specific suggestions with regard to this ministry of music.

*The Singing.* This should be given a major place in every weekly meeting. People like to sing; they are blessed and strengthened by singing. Folks like to do things together, and there is special virtue in communal experiences. There

are definite physical advantages to be gained from hearty singing, while the spiritual benefits derived from the singing of hymns and other religious songs are incalculable. Few exercises are more fully enjoyed or more spontaneously entered into than a real song fest. This is particularly true with regard to hymns, as is constantly proved by great community "sings." Most people delight to gather around the piano for a period of singing. The richness of opportunity which is afforded by the midweek service in this respect is almost without limit. However, this program of song must never become stereotyped. Here as elsewhere uniformity kills.

*The Pianist.* This member of the church family is one of the indispensable "musts" for an achieving midweek service. Note some of the qualifications of a good pianist:

1. Undoubted Christian sincerity. This is paramount. The person at the piano should be as trustworthy in Christian living as the pastor. No element can substitute for genuineness.
2. Musical ability. This must be of a rather special type. The pianist should possess a sixth sense, that quality which will enable him to feel the significance of the opportunity and to meet the need by immediate and reasonably accurate reactions. Many an accomplished accompanist and competent church organist fails to pass this test in the realm of intangibles. Our pianist will surely maintain a satisfactory tempo—dragging on the hymns adds a needless handicap. The touch must be positive and pronounced, with never a suggestion of any "tinkle, tinkle" business. Alertness is always an important factor.

3. Regular attendance. Heaven must have special places of distinction for the pianists—their number is not large—

who are present every week. Variety is to be commended in many fields, but not in the matter of the midweek pianist. It is difficult indeed to estimate the hurtful effect on the service when the starting time has arrived and the pianist is absent. This psychological disadvantage is greatly increased when the pastor says something like this, "I see that our regular pianist is absent—will someone volunteer to play for us?" This call is fraught with risk, for frequently the person who volunteers is unqualified and plays in such a fashion as to "kill the meeting." Even if the person who does "come forward" is fully competent, the fact that such a call had to be made militates greatly against the meeting. To insure maximum results, the program must move forward like clockwork from start to finish.

4. Punctuality. The midweek service should start on time. Irrespective of how many or how few are present, the meeting must begin on schedule. Few things can hinder the service more than for the pianist to be tardy—even a few minutes. "Well begun is half done." Often by the exercise of skillful measures the pastor can secure this regularity and punctuality on the part of the pianist. The element of praise will help. Every person likes to know that his or her efforts are appreciated and needed. All the time and tact which the pastor devotes to this end will eventually return worthy dividends.

*The Song Leader.* Not all churches can have a capable leader of song for the week-night gathering, but more could if they would. Practically every church has its director or minister of music for the Sunday service. This is well, but why not provide equally well for the midweek service? Here is revealed the true estimate which a majority of churches and ministers place on the service between Sun-

days. The pastor and song leader will work very closely together; they will exemplify the meaning of "team play." The selection of hymns is a vital part of the minister's work. The numbers should be reported to the leader of song well in advance of the meeting night. The song leader will, of course, be a person of proved Christian character; no other gift can take the place of this qualification.

There is a definite psychological advantage gained by having the leader appear on the platform first. From time to time, however, useful variety can be introduced by the pastor's coming first, also by the two appearing at the same time. Generally, however, it will be found wise for the song leader to precede the minister and get the singing started, before the latter makes his appearance.

*The Hymnal.* It is not overstating the case to say that the week-night service can fail miserably by the use of an unsuitable songbook. One thing can be set down with assurance: the hymnal used for Sunday worship is not practical for the midweek gathering. It simply does not meet the need, for this service should never be thought of as a tiny replica of the Sunday worship; it must be different and distinctive in every detail.

The hymnal must not be cheap in either price or content, yet its hymns should be lighter and thoroughly singable. The more stately, majestic hymns which we naturally associate with the formal Sunday worship are not suited to this popular, fellowship gathering. On the other hand, it has been well said that "cheap hymns make a cheap service," although it must be remembered that hymns without rhythm and movement will congeal the midweek spirit. There is a happy medium between these two extremes to be found in those hymns which average people can sing and which they delight

to sing. Experience has repeatedly proved that old hymns are most suitable, those which people pretty generally "know by heart."

It will be observed that the selection of a hymnal is a matter of more than passing significance. Upon the choice made hinges much of the success of the meeting. It is expensive economy to attempt financial savings on this purchase. There is a type of bargain-driving that, in the long run, proves extremely costly. No favorable consideration is to be given to paper-covered books; full cloth binding is required, for these books will be subjected to hard use. Common sense suggests that a sufficient supply of books be purchased. People will sing better when each has a hymnal. The custom of "looking on together" is impractical. Heavy, clumsy books cannot serve acceptably. When the hymnals become dog-eared, with leaves either lost or loose, new ones should be secured. Battered, soiled songbooks advertise the church adversely. God's service is worthy of "the first fruits." The purchase of new books is not the financial obstacle which at first it might seem—whatever the numerical strength of the church. There is no need to draw upon the treasury. Permit the people to pay directly. They will do this every time. When a choice of books has been made, have the required number shipped to the church. Credit will be given gladly for thirty or even sixty days. Stack the books on the platform for Sunday—make the display as large and attractive as possible. Make an announcement something like this:

"These are our new books for the week-night service. We do not wish to draw upon our treasury for the cost of these books. But we are inviting each member of the congregation, so far as you may be able, to pay for at least one copy. If it is your desire, you can give your book or books in

memory of some dear one. Proper inscription will be made on the first page of each book thus presented. (Here name those who are to receive the money at the close of the service and name the price.) We shall not use any of these new books until all have been paid for. For that reason you will wish to buy your books this morning if possible." We have used this method many times during our ministry, and never has there been a book unsold.

*The Selection of Hymns.* This is the pastor's business. Choices should be made with care; hymns selected should assist in making the service a unit, never merely because they "sing well." As a rule it is unwise for the song leader or minister, as the case may be, to face an expectant congregation and say, "Now, what is your favorite hymn? We'll sing it." One of two difficulties will usually result—either silence, or a medley of numbers which, to say the very least, is decidedly impractical.

Hymns should be chosen well in advance of the service. The pastor who reaches for the hymnal fifteen minutes before starting time demonstrates lack of preparation. Special seasons—such as patriotic holidays, Thanksgiving and Christmas—demand special selections. In the church served by the writer, the Thursday night (the regular time of the midweek service) before Christmas has come to be known traditionally as "Carol Night." How the people come, and how they sing! The same selections in May would miss the mark by a thousand miles. Timeliness is a great factor in wise choice of hymns. On rainy nights bright, optimistic songs should be selected. We recall one such night—it seemed as though the clouds had literally been ripped open that the earth might be tremendously deluged. Only about one hundred people ventured forth—wet weather walkers

truly! Our first three hymns were "Showers of Blessings," "Sunshine in the Soul," and "Count Your Blessings." The reaction was almost magical. Once again we were amazed at the obvious power of hymn singing!

Choruses can also be used effectively. There is no spiritual yardstick with which to measure their value. People learn a chorus easily and delight to sing it. At least a dozen should be kept right at the fingertips of the one who leads the singing. The competent pianist will be ready at an instant's notice to play the requested chorus. Prayer choruses are particularly valuable, either as a prelude to the prayer time, or during its progress. When, with bowed heads, the entire group sings—while in an attitude of prayer—such a chorus as

Into my heart, into my heart,  
Come into my heart, Lord Jesus;  
Come in today, come in to stay,  
Come into my heart, Lord Jesus,

the people feel the deeper ministry of the Spirit of God. It is almost impossible to secure this reaction by the use of a hymn which requires finding a page in the hymnal.

There are hymns, or choruses, for all occasions and all themes. However, there can also be much variation in the method of choosing and singing them. The following are just a few suggestions.

1. All-Request Nights. Once in a while, perhaps every three months, let the people choose the hymns, but announce this feature fully two weeks in advance and insist that choices be in the pastor's hand not later than a week before the date of the meeting. This is a democratic method and at the same time eliminates the element of hit-or-miss. Of course, not all the hymns submitted can be used—there will

be too large a number; the extras, however, may be used by the pastor in the weeks following, at which time each should be duly acknowledged. This plan will encourage future co-operation.

2. Most-Popular-Hymn Nights. This can be made a popular and profitable departure. Place blank cards in the pew-racks and invite the people at the Sunday services to write the names of their five favorite hymns. Continue this program for three or four weeks, explaining that the five songs receiving the highest number of votes will be used at the midweek service—and definitely naming the date. Rest assured that the people will vote. Interest will be greatly stimulated—so much so that people who have not attended the midweek service in years will make an effort to come. Here is an opportunity for appealing newspaper publicity. Reporters will gladly feature a theme that has such obvious reader interest. When the long expected night comes when the Five Favorites are to be sung, the attendance will call for the "Standing Room Only" sign. The particular merit of this plan is that it can be repeated year after year. It is not difficult for any thoughtful person to see the simple, basic reasons for the wide appeal of this plan.

3. Antiphonal Singing. This custom dates back to ancient patriarchal times, as proved by the character of the Psalms, yet it can be made both popular and practical today. Have the people on the speaker's right sing the first line of the hymn, then those on the left sing the second. Or, have the women sing and then the men; or those under twenty sing in response to those over twenty. Here will be found almost endless as well as startling variety. It must be borne in mind, however, that not all hymns are suitable for this type of singing. Few things will appear more ridiculous than an attempt to use a song in this way which is not adaptable.

4. Echo Singing. A delightful element of surprise may be secured by echo singing. Having announced the hymn, request the congregation to sing the first verse—this by way of illustration—and stop. The effect produced is electrical when voices are heard in the distance singing the chorus. These echo singers—not many in number—will be stationed out of sight but not out of hearing. Obviously many variations can be worked out—all to real advantage. The richness of this feature will be best conserved by maintaining the surprise factor; preannouncements should not be made.

5. Stories behind the Hymns. The brief portrayal of the reason why a hymn was written increases the value of the musical program. We believe it best for lay folks to give these short recitals. The pastor will select the one who is to speak and supply the needed factual material. Many books dealing with the history of hymns are readily available. For instance, announce the number of "Let the Lower Lights Be Burning," after which say something like this: "Before we sing this well-known hymn, I have requested Mr. Blank to tell us, in about two minutes, how it came to be written." After the story, people will sing with more appreciation than otherwise could be possible. This method may be used over a considerable period of time—not, however, more frequently than twice a month. The result will be an accumulation of useful information that the audience will treasure.

*Musical Instruments.* Added profit will result from the use of musical instruments in addition to the piano. An orchestra is of immeasurable value. However, even a violin or two, or a trumpet, will serve to strengthen the quality of singing. In some small churches an orchestra may not be possible, but there are few parishes indeed in which a few

orchestral pieces cannot be found if diligent search is made. It is surprising how willingly most musicians will play—feel honored to be asked.

*Special Music.* We have found that one special musical number each week greatly enhances the value of the service. As a rule, these numbers should be rendered by individuals and groups within the church. It is a poor policy to import singers and far better to utilize the latent talent at home.

A special committee should be in charge of this part of the program, the personnel of which should include three or five, not more. This committee should be given the same rank as other major committees of the church. This fact cannot be overemphasized. It will not be practical to load this task on the regular music committee of the church; moreover, the more people enlisted in definite service, the greater will be the effectiveness of the entire organization.

These special musical numbers afford opportunity for wide variety: solos, duets, trios, quartets, junior and senior choirs, group numbers from "special guests," and a variety of instrumental numbers. Guest artists, however, though sometimes more proficient, seldom prove as interesting and satisfying as local talent.

These are only a few workable suggestions by which the service-of-song can be made to bless and strengthen the mid-week meeting. They are all proven, practical plans that have passed the pragmatic test. On the other hand, scores of similar methods can be originated.

## Chapter VI

### THE PEOPLE CAN BE HELPED TO PRAY

THE midweek service of yesteryears gained its distinctive title—The Prayer Meeting—from the fact that prayer was given chief place. It was the time when those present “battered the gates of heaven with storms of prayer.”

The passing of time has never lessened the value of prayer, since “prayer moves the hand which moves the world.” A weeknight religious gathering with prayer either neglected or forgotten cannot truly be called Christian. The vital midweek gathering of the future will continue to give its rightful place to prayer; however, along with this will go other equally important emphases. Were this statement made fifty years ago, its author would be convicted of heresy in less time than it takes to tell. Prayer? Of course, but not all prayer. There should be appropriate periods set apart for the people to gather for prayer and nothing else, but this can never be the program for an outreaching, midweek, fellowship meeting.

We observe a marked tendency to permit, or force, the pendulum to swing so far in the opposite direction from that of the old order as to relegate prayer to a minimum. We are told repeatedly, with absolute sincerity, that this shift in emphasis has been inevitable by either the inability or unwillingness of people to pray audibly in public gatherings.

Experience covering something over two decades sharply disproves this conclusion. Undoubtedly, it is true that the rank and file of people, even officeholders in the church, are

not given to the exercise of voicing prayers in group meetings. This fact must be faced; realism is to be squarely confronted.

But, sympathetic encouragement will stimulate many people not only to pray in public, but to enjoy and be greatly blessed by the practice. This can be accomplished, and in doing this glorious task, the minister makes another notable contribution to the work of the Kingdom. Happy is the pastor who patiently guides his people into the enriching exercise of public prayer.

Probably there is no force which so binds a people together in the bonds of Christian fellowship and loyalty as communal prayer. This is truly "the tie that binds." Someone has fittingly said, "To pray together, in whatever tongue, is the most tender brotherhood of hope and sympathy that men can contract in life." Even a fleeting glimpse at the record of the early apostolic church convinces one of the strength and fortitude which came to its members through the continued fellowship of prayer.

Prayer proves a person normal. The heart seeks God as instinctively as a flower turns its face toward the sun. Says James Freeman Clarke, "It is so natural for a man to pray that no theory can prevent him from doing it." This is true; yet indifference, shyness, fear, or some other element can prevent a person from entering upon public prayer. In a majority of instances, however, these adverse factors can be mastered. Let us always remember that, in encouraging and teaching the people to pray, we are seeking to stimulate one of the deepest instincts of the soul—not creating the capacity. This is a most inspiring truth. Many people have yet to discover the abundance of riches inherent in the continent of prayer—the pastor is privileged to be a revealer. "Prayer is so necessary," says Fenelon, "and the source of so

many blessings, that he who has discovered the treasure cannot be prevented from having recourse to it whenever he has an opportunity." Neither should it be forgotten that the faithful practice of private prayer greatly fosters prayer in public.

If memory serves correctly, we are genuinely grateful the old-time "season of prayer" cannot be the vogue in the successful midweek service of the future. We mean no derogation by this statement for, beyond question, many people were greatly blessed by that type of spiritual participation. But to a small boy, it used to seem that the prayers offered had no satisfying terminal facilities. I wondered when the one praying would say "Amen," and be through. This reminds us of the preacher who, on a given occasion, was reputed to have prayed on and on. Finally, in an attempt at self-defense, an old deacon shouted, "Amen," whereupon the pastor said with evident gratitude, "Thank you, Deacon; I couldn't think of that word, so had to continue praying."

The spiritual stalwarts of earlier generations surely engaged in long, verbose, repetitious prayers. Few observed the pertinent admonition, "Use not vain repetitions." The new day demands prayer as imperatively as any previous era, but the type of public prayer must be different. People *can* be led to pray in public. We offer some practical suggestions for the attainment of that objective.

*Let the People Know That You Expect Them To Pray.* This is the only logical approach. Never suggest, let alone apologize for, the inability of the people to pray. Those for whom apologies are offered have little chance of success in any endeavor. Confidence stimulates confidence. A majority of those attending the midweek gathering will be professedly Christian, members of the church. This presupposes the

practice of private prayer. "We engage to maintain family and secret devotion" is one of the main parts of every church covenant.

Work upon the assumption that among all these folks, who have solemnly covenanted together to continue "secret devotion," there will be at least a few who will pray in public when opportunity comes. We could cite many striking incidents to prove the validity of this expectation. One of the surest ways to "kill" the prayertime is for the preacher to say apologetically something like this, "We have come to the time of prayer; will those who are able please lead us?" The reaction of inferiority comes instantly—people will remain silent. This is a most unwise psychological approach, for the fact is that every person present *can* pray. The people can and must be led to believe in themselves. If this procedure is followed, the time will not be far off when a considerable number will have enough faith in themselves to pray in public. "According to your faith be it unto you," works in this field as in all others. Brief, simple prayers by the preacher will help greatly to this end.

*Use Great Prayer Poems.* Few agents are more simple or potent. The preacher can read such a poem frequently as the introductory part of the prayer service. If careful search is made through various anthologies, an adequate list of acceptable poems will be found. Typical are, "Awareness," Teicher; "The Larger Prayer," Cheney; "In Thy Presence," Trench; "Two Prayers," Gilman; "God Hears Prayer," Fuller; and "Prayer," Richardson.

Let the pastor study each poem until he is familiar with every aspect of its form and content. The reading is always to be an act of devotion, not an elocutionary performance. Generally the effectiveness will be increased by deliberate-

ness in reading, that the people may take in the message. This will "prime the pump," assist in starting the flow of intelligent prayer.

Included among great prayer poems will be many of the devotional Psalms, such as the following: numbers 19, 23, 27, 51, 91, 103, 116. These can be presented in a variety of ways. The preacher may read alone. The reading may be responsive, antiphonal, or in unison. However, we believe that for the purpose of stimulating audible prayer the best method will be for the minister to read alone.

*Use Great Prayer Hymns.* People need to be taught the fine art of satisfying prayer through the use of devotional hymns. That the obvious often remains hidden is emphatically true in the field of hymnology. Too frequently hymns are sung in a colorless, mechanical manner, with the great message being missed in part, if not altogether. When this is allowed to occur, a most valuable agency is overlooked.

It is part of the minister's privilege to see that this value is conserved. The people can be taught to pray worshipfully and understandingly by the intelligent use of hymn words. Suppose the pastor explains, "This is a hymn of prayer. The words were penned by one who aspired to seek and find God. Note the words of this first stanza before we start to sing. As we sing let us pray." Special notations can be made regarding some or all of the stanzas. Sometimes it will add to the richness of the hymn to read the words before singing them.

*Ask for and Suggest Special Objectives for Prayer.* One of the finest ways to maintain the fellowship ideal for this service between Sundays is to have special reasons for prayer definitely named. This is likewise a remarkable stimulant for vocal prayer at the meeting. There is a

pronounced tendency to generalize in prayer, to expect nothing in particular.

The pastor must see to it that opportunity is made for people to name specific objects for prayer. It will not always be necessary to call people by name, although usually this is quite fitting. Let the people enumerate several needs for which prayer is desired. The response to this invitation may not be vigorous at first but, if the practice is continued, progress will be noticeable. It is interesting to observe how animated are those who suggest a need for prayer. They furnish a definite prayer motive through their own thoughtfulness and concern; they will proceed to pray. Admittedly the pastor will have a more comprehensive knowledge of parish needs than any other person. He is, therefore, in a position to name other objects for which prayer should be made, both in and beyond the parish; these will add further stimulus for audible prayer.

*Ask How Many Will Pray Aloud.* Have those who respond favorably indicate their willingness by a show of hands. Be definite; tie things down securely; leave nothing to chance. The writer almost unfailingly follows this procedure. Before the prayer period begins, sometimes fully ten minutes before, he will stop the singing in the midst of a hymn, and say, "There must be thirty to forty Philatheas here tonight. How many are there in your group who will offer an audible prayer when opportunity comes? Please indicate by your upraised hand." Some hands will be raised. This interrogation can be continued, "How many members of the men's class? Of the young people's societies?" So on right down the line. Many hands will be lifted. Faithful use of this method for a few months will produce wonderful results. Don't be afraid to ask! The only danger is that

after a while there may be too many who indicate their willingness to pray aloud; as important as prayer is, the service cannot be given over entirely to this—a happy proportion must be maintained.

*Secure the Signed Promise from Several To Pray.* This makes a sure thing certain. It works, and nothing will prevent a hearty response. Let the pastor move around quietly among his officeholders and other devout people. Talk with them not as a group, but as individuals. Secure a promise from each to pray at the weekly meeting. Nor is a verbal promise enough. Have cards printed and then see to it that those promising to pray "sign on the dotted line." This has a positive psychological value which should not be lost. People of honor mean to keep their word, but a signed promise adds greater strength.

The following is the text of a prayer-promise card which the writer used to advantage a few years ago:

That I may more fully "grow in grace,"  
That I may be of the largest usefulness and inspiration to my pastor,  
That I may personally and continuously help to make this year in my church the best it has ever known,

#### I PROMISE

To offer an audible prayer at every Thursday night Glad Service which I shall be able to attend.

This worked; it will always help. Few things can be simpler; seldom can any plan produce greater results in proportion to the effort involved. Those who doubt the work-

ability of this idea are challenged to put it to the test. Happy and profitable results are awaiting discovery.

*Use Prayer Cards for Prospective Followers of Christ.* These are available at reasonable cost at most denominational headquarters. They usually come printed in duplicate, one to be filled out and used by the person "signing up," and the copy to be given to the minister. We have found this agency very useful in producing more audible prayer at the week-night service. As people talk with God concerning certain definite individuals in relation to Christian decision and church membership, they will become more prayerful. Folks who are interested sufficiently in the advancement of the Kingdom to keep and use a prayer list will generally be found at the midweek service. Thus, the more prayer cards in circulation the larger will be the week-night gathering in numbers, and in prayers audibly offered.

*Silent Prayer Can Be Made Useful.* It is not enough that "we'll all stand one minute in silent prayer as we remember Mr. Blank." The motive behind this action is commendable but we seriously question its practicability. However, periods—not long ones—of silent prayer, with heads bowed and hearts uplifted, can be rich in spiritual blessing. Soft music, particularly that of two or three violins (although the piano can serve to splendid advantage), will enhance the blessing received. The humming of prayer tunes has much to commend it in building up the superstructure of prayer. Here again the pastor is confronted with a wide variety of methods.

*Train the Children To Pray.* We have reason to believe that the great majority of children are taught to pray by their mothers. This is one of the highest prerogatives of

motherhood. We all thank God for sacred memories of our prayer instruction in the school of maternal love. However, even more than this is imperative if children and youth are to engage in public prayer.

This need presents a stirring challenge, one which every church can and must accept. Those who direct the societies for children and youth should teach them to pray in their meetings, help them to overcome the fear of their own voices in group gatherings for worship. This is not difficult, and when accomplished a major contribution will have been made to the larger prayer life of the weeknight meeting of the church. This development is normal and should be expected. In *The Glad Service* of the church served by the writer, some of the richest and most stimulating prayers are those of boys and girls in their early teens. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Better to spend added time with children than to devote so much effort on adults—for the most part the habits of the latter are firmly fixed.

*Provide Frequent Meetings for Prayer.* We have alluded to this need—it is strikingly important. Certainly every church ought to maintain at least one service of this character each Sunday—a time when praying people can come together for prayer. We know a church which sustains a Sunday morning gathering, the first meeting of the day. It is called "The Bowed Heart Time." The attendance is never large, but this lack is compensated for by the earnestness of each prayer.

In that same church another gathering solely for prayer is held thirty minutes before the Sunday evening service starts. Conducted in a spacious room on the second floor, it is appropriately called "The Upper Room Gathering." At-

tendance varies from fifteen to forty. This meeting furnishes a real "lift" for the service which follows immediately.

It will be found practical to hold an "after meeting" following the Sunday night service, or at the close of the Sunday morning worship if that is the only Lord's Day meeting. This should be conducted in another room, preferably one which directly adjoins the sanctuary. By rearrangement, the last note of the organ postlude will be the signal for the first strains of a popular, old hymn, being played in the room where the second service is to be conducted. The song leader will start the singing at once and continue while the people are coming—and they will come! Following the hymns and a chorus or two, have the prayers begin. How the people will pray under these favorable conditions! The meeting is not to be prolonged. Better close when twenty or twenty-five brief prayers have been voiced. It will be found that meetings like these held occasionally will be reflected in the midweek gathering, especially in the prayer time.

*Beware of Long Prayers!* Long, drawn-out, public prayers—however splendid in phraseology and content—belong to the past. There are some people—perfectly fine in everything but judgment—who seem to feel it necessary to go into minute details about many matters. At the risk of injuring some feelings, these protracted prayers must be checked. This is no easy matter. It is recorded that a certain minister, whose prayer became lengthy in one of D. L. Moody's famous meetings, caused the latter to arise and say to the congregation, "While the brother is finishing his prayer let us unite in singing hymn 149." This measure was heroic but extremely efficient.

The need is not for a few long prayers, but for many brief ones. The pastor must not hesitate to state this fact plainly, yet adroitly. "In the prayer period tonight our time will be limited," the minister can say, "so let us have twenty-five brief prayers. Two or three sentences can make an adequate prayer for this happy occasion. Let us remember that one long prayer will take time from several others—we won't take their time, I'm sure." Usually an announcement of this nature will serve the desired end. Should it fail, more personal and persuasive measures must be used, for, "come wind, come weather," the long prayers are to be curbed. No statement in this book is packed with larger, more practical significance.

*Designate Certain People To Start the Prayertime.* These are not to be drafted from the platform—this procedure is both unfair and unwise. See your leaders personally and privately. They will readily assent. The most effectual prayertime is that which gets under way quickly and continues without lapse. These goals can be achieved through the exercise of meticulous preparation. Leave nothing to happenstance. Plan your work carefully, and then work your plan vigorously. In the choice of these leaders be sure to select representatives of different age groups. Children and youth will thrill to the challenge.

Always remember that people can be encouraged and helped to pray at these public gatherings. Whatever must be neglected due to the pressure of work upon him, the pastor should never permit this part of his ministry to go unserved. Help people to pray—blessed dividends will surely accrue from the investment.

## Chapter VII

### WITNESSING AFTER THE NEW PATTERN

"LET the redeemed of the Lord say so" is dateless—an admonition applicable to every age. To the early disciples Jesus said, "And ye shall be witnesses unto me." The Master had no other plan. He depended upon such helpers as Peter, James, John, and others, many of whose names have not even been preserved for us. He was confident of their fidelity. Hear the sequel: "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them."

The demand for the Christian witness is inherent, unchangeable. This noble practice produces three notable results: it honors the expectancy of God; it blesses others; it strengthens the spiritual life of the witness.

These facts were clearly defined in the thinking of those responsible for the prayer meeting of earlier times. With the one exception of prayer, the greatest emphasis was given to the act of witnessing. Because of this fact "the testimony service" was a major item in the program. For the most part the witness had to do with the intimate, personal experience—the more personal it was, the stronger it was considered. Beyond the faintest doubt the majority of these "testimonies" were genuine. But this plan always afforded easy access to hypocrisy, a claim to be something which experience and conduct could not support. Possibly this served to discourage this mode of witnessing. Be that as it may, "the testimony service" gradually lessened in the number of participants and in fervency, until the day came when ministers generally agreed—no other alternative ap-

peared possible—that witnessing in the midweek service was not helpful.

Life remains the same in essence, but forever clamors for modernized methods by which to achieve larger expression. Life pulses with dynamic energy, it is never static. This explains why “the testimony service” of a century ago cannot possibly meet the needs of our age. Its technique has become outmoded. It is nothing less than futile for one to become so attached to certain methods as to strive to keep them alive even after they have lost their usefulness. “Let the dead bury their dead,” that the Cause of Christ may move on to the attainment of larger triumphs.

While people generally refuse to testify about their more intimate Christian experience today, they can be encouraged and assisted to bear witness in keeping with modern trends. In the future service between Sundays many vibrant, radiant, useful testimonies will be given, and these without resorting to any “tooth-pulling” process. This prediction is based upon actual results achieved by some ministers in wide-awake, midweek meetings of the present—a foretaste of possibilities for the days to come. Let us enumerate some ways by which effective witnessing may be secured.

*Turn Announcements into “Witnessing.”* “Service” is a master word in Christianity. Jesus “went about doing good.” The several organizations of the church—the organized classes, young people’s societies, women’s groups, and other similar bodies—live to serve. Every activity is planned and executed to the end that larger service may be rendered in Kingdom building. In connection with these events many announcements are made. Naturally if these notices are given on Sunday, the preacher will give them, but there is no good reason why he should claim this prerogative as his own at the week-night meeting.

Invite the heads of the several organizations to make these announcements. This is not only appropriate but farsighted. The announcer will be gratified by the recognition, and his message concerning some unselfish activity can be made a splendid Christian witness. This method can be used regularly. Needless to say, these notices are to be marked by brevity.

*Make Use of the Scriptures.* Here is a fertile field for the production of useful witnessing. The thoughtful presentation of favorite Bible verses constitutes fruitful testimony, and this practice develops an ability to witness in other ways later. Practically every person at the service has memorized some few verses of Scripture. An opportunity to voice these will usually insure a spirited period of witnessing. Those who have not tried this plan have a pleasant surprise in store.

There are many ways to secure true witnessing by the use of the Bible. Popular and profitable will be the making of "a string of pearls"—Scripture pearls. Let the leader say something like this, "We want to take a few moments now to form a string of Bible pearls. There is space for only twenty-five of these precious stones. Will Mrs. Blank (always designate the starter, who has been coached beforehand, by name) please give the first pearl, a big one, to be placed right in the center? Then we will use twelve on each side." As soon as the center pearl has been supplied, let the others be named quickly. The pastor who has never used this idea will be amazed at the rapidity and enthusiasm with which "the string" is formed. A surprising value of this method is that it can be used repeatedly.

Scriptural witnessing can be enriched by having verses given dealing with definite themes on special nights, such

as the love of God, the forgiveness of sin, the value of the Bible. To achieve success in this type of testimony the preacher must announce in advance the special subject for the scriptural quotations. Few people are prepared to furnish appropriate verses on the spur of the moment. Previous announcement will induce some people to "search the Scriptures" diligently that fitting verses may be secured.

Sometimes it will be advantageous to announce a week in advance that people are invited to name verses which helpfully illustrate personal and public experiences, Scripture passages which have touched life in practical ways in modern times. The response to this invitation will be far larger than one at first would expect. When people make an honest attempt to unite biblical truth with the deeper issues of life, real spiritual advance will be gained.

One can insure lively witnessing by planning the use of Scripture in a contest. With the people divided evenly, have verses given alternately from one side and then the other. Each verse quoted correctly scores a point, while the failure of any person to respond means the loss of a point. This method will accomplish much in the short period of ten minutes. This exercise need not be "a demonstration" either, but rather a thorough-going spiritual benediction.

Nor is it at all necessary to introduce the competitive idea with this type of witnessing. We give the following recent experience to illustrate. Without any previous announcement the preacher—during the opening song service—asked, "How many are there here tonight who actually know one Bible verse?" Several heads nodded in the affirmative. The pastor waited for perhaps thirty seconds, and then proceeded to make this request, "Will all who know at least one Bible verse please raise your hands with me?" Practically every hand was lifted.

Another hymn or two followed, the announcements made—five lay folks had a share in this—and the attendance taken. The people were expectant, they knew "something was to happen."

"Starting with people on the right side of the middle aisle," said the pastor, "and then crossing to those on the left, we will read the Scriptures responsively from memory. All ready? Let's start."

There was no hesitation—the first verse came in an instant. Back and forth the witness went with dignified rapidity, at times two or three seeking to make their "contribution" at the same second, until forty verses had been given. Twice as many would have been voiced had the minister allowed sufficient time.

It is difficult to imagine how a period of eight minutes could be used to greater social and spiritual enrichment. The people were enthused by an opportunity for witnessing which was "a little different." Surely this plan can be followed by any church, anywhere, and at any time.

It may be found necessary at the outset to have people read verses of Scripture from responsive readings in the back of the hymnal. This plan, while most rudimentary, often serves to stimulate interest and develop confidence, thus opening the way for larger expressions in the future. The fledgling does not fly upon its first attempt, neither will the religious neophyte give a fluent witness in his first effort. Direction determines destiny however. It is not so much how fast one is traveling, but in what direction one is moving. The thoughtful pastor will express his sincere appreciation to "the beginner." Nothing can serve to encourage and stimulate better than this recognition.

A common but most worthy practice in children's groups is the learning of the books of the Bible. This affords a

splendid opportunity to train the youngsters in the art of witnessing—let them name the books in the week-night meeting. Start them young; have them “get the feel of speaking in meetings.” Occasionally a brief Bible hunt—not to last over five minutes—can be used to advantage. Nine times out of ten the children present will win “the hunt” in competition with the adults.

*Give Thanks.* At least four times annually the witnessing can be trained upon and centered at this question, “What have I to be grateful for?” A service of this character should be announced at least a week in advance. Allow no person to mention more than one reason for thanksgiving. This prohibition has a distinct psychological value. Interest will be deepened by having someone write the blessings enumerated on a blackboard, numbering them as given. A formidable list always results. The popularity of this plan is outstanding—expressing thanks to God for his mercies is always a fruitful practice, the worth of which cannot be computed.

This sort of program can be made of paramount importance at the week-night service which immediately precedes the annual Thanksgiving Day. It will prove a potent agency for directing those in attendance to think of and speak about spiritual values. The observance of the holiday will be markedly more significant for those who are led to make this pre-analysis of their blessings.

*Prayers Are Answered.* Many striking illustrations of definite answers to prayer are found in the Scriptures. Encourage the people to search these out and speak of them briefly. This practice will prove intensely interesting for a considerable number of folks.

Quite naturally this will lead those present to enumerate

some instances of answered prayer in their own lives. Here is a rich vein of pure gold waiting for discovery and use. This is one of the most potent factors in the development of individual and communal spiritual life. Leaders of Christian Science recognize this inherent value and build on the testimonies regarding cures and healings which have been wrought in the lives of the devotees.

At first thought it might appear that few people could be led to engage in this form of witnessing, but this idea is quickly disproved when the plan is put into operation. Folks do believe in the power of prayer, and they delight to tell in whole or in part how prayers have been answered. Oftentimes the person from whom the least is expected surprises you by the simplicity and the genuineness of his testimony. To hear a brief, sincere experience of God's goodness blesses all those who listen.

*Choose Favorite Hymns.* Each person attending the week-night service will be able to name some favorite hymn. Is there a definite reason why that particular hymn is a certain person's favorite? A wealth of strong, practical material for useful witnessing is impregnated in that reason. It will be found frequently that the same hymn is the favorite of several different people, and for varying causes. Oceans of rich sentiment—especially that connected with parents, the old home, and other far away values—surge about these oft-used hymns. This plan often "works" when others prove uninteresting. People will speak along this line who otherwise might remain silent.

Impress the people with the fact that in the singing of a favorite hymn one can give a most useful testimony. Encourage folks to request the use of these favorites during the witnessing period, as their personal testimonies.

A surprisingly large number will make the request, "My favorite hymn is No. .... May we sing it as my witness?"

*Discuss Current Events.* Ask the people to observe carefully the events of the week, local as well as those of the wider circles, and to speak of them in their relation to the betterment or injury of society. These leads are profitable if the moral and spiritual aspects are kept in the foreground. The writer has utilized this plan with satisfying results. He has been surprised repeatedly at the response—newspaper clippings, magazine digests, radio comments, and a wide variety of sources are quoted—all in the light of Christian faith. Keen animation and obvious interest will always mark this form of witnessing. There have been times when it was rather difficult to close this part of the meeting.

There are those who insist that religion moves on a level far removed from the practical issues of life. The current events method will do much to explode this fallacy; the critics are compelled to observe that religion undergirds and permeates every stratum of human experience.

*Have Poems Quoted.* Short poems and excerpts from longer ones constitute another challenging source for useful witnessing. Most people have a high regard for poetry, while some are passionately fond of this form of literature. They feel that the poet is moved by the Eternal, to him are given glimpses of life at its best and the ability to paint word-pictures which greatly inspire. The people need to be encouraged to bring gems from this mine, either memorized or written.

We know of a church group which meets each week in a devotional service forty-five minutes prior to the start of the week-night service. The first third of the time is given over exclusively to the reading of short poems which have

deeply impressed the several individuals during the previous week. One finds it extremely difficult to estimate the spiritual uplift that this simple procedure gives.

It will be wise for the minister to direct the thoughts of his people to such poets as Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell, Browning, Wordsworth, and Tennyson. Among living poets, as regards short selections appropriate for the mid-week gathering, Markham takes high rank. In seeking selections for the midweek service the aesthetic life will be cultivated, thus making the search serve a twofold purpose.

*Make Use of Biography.* Few studies afford more value than that of great lives, whether past or contemporary. The life-stories of noble characters are inspirational and challenging. Because this is true, it will be gainful to have a witnessing period once or twice each year centering around the subject: "Lives that have helped me most and why." This practice lifts a person out of the selfish and provincial, affording a comprehensive view of worthy character, unbiased by regard for race, color, or creed. This reaction is imperatively needed.

If approached in the right way, this plan will operate with peculiar success, particularly among the young people. Hero-worship is characteristic of youth. Each young person aspires to reach the summits which have been scaled by his heroes and heroines.

*Be Patriotic.* Services preceding Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Armistice Day, and the birthdays of great national heroes can be capitalized profitably. Have the testimonies upon such occasions answer such questions as, "What is the source of our national greatness?" "Is America predominantly Christian?" "What is the place of the church

in our national life?" "What is the worth of the church in the development of our nation's future?" These are merely suggestive of the host of interrogations that can be asked.

*Use the "True or False" Contest.* Quizzes continue popular in radio programs. Fifty years ago they had not been dreamed of; but, time moves onward. New avenues of expression are being continually discovered. The commercial world seeks, finds and uses the new, the attractive, the novel. Why not the church, engaged in the biggest business on earth?

We used the "True or False" contests in the Sunday evening service and the attendance was greatly increased over a period of several months by this feature. The results were most gratifying. Two teams—five on a side—chosen from different organizations, contested. The questions were all based upon the Scriptures. The contest was timed at exactly five minutes. The entire church was blessed with new vigor and enthusiasm. This plan will function splendidly as a part of the witnessing period of the week-night service.

*Review the Previous Sunday's Services.* Generally the preacher does not realize that he is a highly favored person—he is permitted to speak week after week at the services of the church without his listeners having the privilege of rebuttal. Whether in agreement with what he says or not, the laity just "can't talk back"—at least, not then and there!

Why not give the people an opportunity once in a while to review the sermon at the week-night meeting? As a rule the comments will be favorable, indeed some will prove highly suggestive to the preacher from the homiletic viewpoint. Infrequently a note of disagreement—even of sharp

criticism—will be voiced, but the good minister will know that, really, "every knock is a boost."

*Have a Church Forum.* This method calls for group discussion—all members of the group if possible—of pertinent questions of the day. The idea presupposes the preacher will begin the consideration and, after speaking briefly, throw it open to all. Subjects to be discussed must be previously announced and should be of such a character as to strike the popular fancy. As in other instances the pastor is the keyman, both in choosing topics and seeing to it that they are discussed. The late Charles E. Jefferson once said, "The time is coming when in all of our large city churches the forum service will be considered not a whit less important than the Sunday school." Personally, we advise that it be used rather sparingly; nevertheless, it has elements of strength which should warrant the interest and investigation of thoughtful pastors. Its successful use requires the mastery of the art of adaptation.

*Caution!* Don't drag out the witnessing part of the meeting. Give a fair, proportionate share of the time to this item. Accept the spontaneous, the ready witnesses. Offer sincere commendation for every effort made, and expect more and better witnessing the following week. Surely enough ideas have been given to suggest something of the variety possible.

## Chapter VIII

### THE MINISTER'S MESSAGE

THE midweek gathering which achieves results is not to be a preaching service nor a close facsimile of the program of Sunday worship. We know of few ways by which the ideals of intimate Christian fellowship can be more quickly dissipated than by the pastor's delivering a regular sermon at this service. Of course, there are a few notable exceptions, but these only serve to prove the rule, and we honestly wonder if, in these meetings, larger ends would not have been gained by seeking to achieve the fellowship objective. We question the wisdom—as a long-range view is taken—of the preacher's doing all the witnessing. How can the people share their witness unless given an opportunity?

These considerations, however, do not alter one pertinent fact, that the preacher must bring a message weekly. This is an important part of his task and privilege; it is eminently practical as well as traditional. Yet, certain leading questions must be met and answered.

How long shall the pastor speak? What shall be the character of his talks? What shall be the content of his message? Probably these are the most important factors that must be considered.

*Length of the Talk.* There is a wide variety of opinion on this subject. There are those who think this message should equal the length of the Sunday morning sermon. In this connection, it must be said that this conclusion is reached largely because of the inability or the unwillingness of the people to sustain the witnessing part of the program.

If those in attendance cannot or will not be induced either to offer audible prayers or give a personal witness, there seems but one alternative—the minister must speak at greater length, "to take up the time." This is undoubtedly one of the chief reasons why hundreds of clergymen have advised against trying to carry on the week-night meeting. The pastor is too often overworked, to the very breaking point; why, then, should he willingly assume this extra burden, especially since he reckons its value open to question? The answer seems to be that the meeting is traditional, it must be continued, and since few of those present do other than listen, the minister must speak at length. Might it not be a commendable thing to keep the oft-repeated pun in mind, "The longer the spoke, the greater the tire"?

Then there are other clergymen, not a small number, who swing to the other extreme. These men are sure that a sermonette of from two to five minutes is adequate. We once heard an eminent professor of homiletics say to his class, "A pastor who preaches longer than two minutes risks the danger of ruining the midweek service."

Between these two extremes—a full-length sermon or a sermonette of from three to five minutes—there may be a golden medium, ten to twelve minutes. We believe this quite practical. This conclusion is the outgrowth of experience and rather wide inquiry. In the services conducted by the writer, ten to twelve minutes seem to be a fair part of the hour for the preacher to use. Longer preachments will interfere with the fellowship and expressional aims of the service. Unless experience proves positively that a longer time is practical, the preacher will confine himself to approximately ten or twelve minutes.

*Character of the Message.* Not only is this to be brief, but of necessity it must be different from that of Sunday sermons. The limitation of time affords small opportunity for amplification, and this precludes extended analyses and outlines. Generally, it will be best to put forward a single idea and elucidate this simply. The message is to be suggestive, not exhaustive, that the people may be challenged to pursue the thought further after the meeting has closed. It has been well said that "the leader's week-night message serves best when it primes the pump." This is especially true if the theme is adaptable to general discussion in the witnessing period which follows.

It is a grave mistake for the leader to think that a brief, simple message requires little if any preparation. As a rule, the shorter the address, the more carefully must the speaker prepare himself. Careless presentation is eloquent in its witness to limited or hasty preparation, and this is most unfortunate in the week-night meeting.

The use of carefully selected stereopticon slides may aid in strengthening the message. The eye-gate is even more receptive and retentive than the ear-gate. When this plan is followed, the apparatus should be adjusted and tested well in advance of the starting hour. Best results will obtain if a roller type screen is used; this permits the screen to be lowered and lifted with a minimum of time and effort.

*The Content of the Message.* A comprehensive answer to this query must deal with generalities, but the type of message will be determined by the season, special occasion, and objective upon which the minister decides, following a careful study of the needs of his people.

Certain seasons will naturally dictate the general content of the messages used in those periods. For instance, the new

year will call for a talk that deals with the future in its relation to past experiences. It is difficult to conceive of anyone who would overlook or neglect this challenging opportunity. But even prior to the New Year, Christmas will determine the content of the preacher's talk for that season. Other days and seasons that influence the content of the message include Lincoln's and Washington's birthdays, Palm Sunday, Easter, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, Children's Day, Father's Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Armistice Day, and Thanksgiving.

Then, Special Nights may suggest the content of the pastor's messages. Among these may be included Valentine Night (a night of peculiarly rich possibilities), Neighbors' Night, Father and Son Night, Mother and Daughter Night, Family Night, Students' Night, Bible Night, Old Hymn Night, Church Officers' Night, Young People's Night, and Church School Night. This list is not exhaustive by any means. Some of these nights should be made annual events, gaining strength and significance in the fact that they are looked forward to with keen anticipation from one year to another.

The pastor will discover the outstanding needs of his parish and arrange his speaking program accordingly. Success here demands a long-range view. Having studied his field and reached definite conclusions, the minister will then map out a general program for the entire year. This will be flexible in character, allowing for a change in schedule whenever it seems advisable.

We do not believe that a preacher should carry half his library away with him in vacationtime. The most profitable vacation is that which brings rest through a complete change. The minister who deliberately plans to work in and with his books during his summer sojourn is unfair both to his parish

and himself. However, he can map out his midweek service program during vacation without doing violence to his holiday.

Among his planned objectives there will be messages that deal with the Scriptures, the devotional life of his own people, human relations, and denominational activities. Each of these will be divided and subdivided in various ways. The fact that, in the week-night service, the pastor speaks almost exclusively to Christians, openly confessed to be such, will temper and influence the quality and content of every message.

Suppose the minister is positive that his people are in special need of more and better knowledge of the Bible. (In what church is this not the case?) He will proceed to outline and arrange some messages, possibly a series, dealing with the Scriptures. Here he is confronted with a fascinating variety of possibilities. The Bible can be studied as a unit, by chapters, books, periods, or topics. Then, biblical biography offers its challenge. This field requires much general as well as special preparation, but the effort put forth will prove abundantly worth while. He who digs in this mine, and keeps on digging, is bound to secure wonderful nuggets of pure gold, both for his people and himself. New and increasingly wonderful illumination ever waits, as it were, to break forth upon the seeker after truth. Man will discover when he honestly and earnestly seeks, for our God is the great revealer. His promise is "seek and ye shall find."

We would not leave the discussion of messages on and about the Bible without making mention of the pre-eminently practical character of the books of the Bible for the week-night service. The Bible is the book with the message for which people are truly hungry. This may sound like a

preachment, but it is not. It is a statement of a plain fact that can easily be proven by anyone who has doubts.

May we offer an actual experience. As a real clinical test, the writer at one time announced his intention of conducting a study of 1 Thessalonians at the midweek meeting. Suitable publicity was made three weeks previous to the start of this study, the bulletin being used largely to this end. People were urged to "bring your New Testament and at least one friend." This effort was purely experimental, and the pastor came to it with fear and trembling. He made the best preparation within his power.

The night came when the work was to be initiated. The attendance was good. The song service was spirited but briefer than usual. Only ten prayers were offered, for time is a pressing factor in communal Bible study. Practically every person present had a copy of the New Testament or a Bible. People seemed to stand on the tiptoe of expectancy. This fact caused the minister much amazement, delightful of course.

The study was begun promptly. It was announced by the leader that questions would be welcomed at any time, even during the talk. Less than ten minutes were required to show that all misgivings about this method of study were groundless. At once the people registered a very emphatic interest and satisfaction. Faces seemed actually to shine as new truth came to heart and mind. Questions came freely. It was soon discovered that six different translations of the Scriptures were there. Helpful comparisons were made. The time passed all too quickly for practically every attendant.

With 1 Thessalonians completed—several nights had been used—the second Epistle was begun. This was literally a mandate from the people. Attendance increased and

interest deepened as we read further and studied the world's best seller. Not an objection was voiced. That in itself was hardly less than a wonder. The people wanted more Bible study. There was no fanaticism, no "isms" propaganda, no hobbies. It was a veritable revelation, more like a miracle than stark realism. Scriptural bread cast upon the waters of human life was coming back rapidly.

The pastor had other plans for the coming weeks, but so great and persistent was the demand that the study of another book was begun. Most surprising of all was the book selected, the popular choice being the Epistle to the Romans. This proved even more fascinating than that of previous books. Often the time of closing was forgotten, so keen was the desire to continue the discussion. The witnessing period, as such, was dispensed with, but the many questions, answers and comments constituted the most helpful kind of "testimony" service.

Perhaps prayer requires special study and emphasis. To meet this demand the pastor will major for a time in such areas as the value, the meaning and the practice of prayer. Unless one exercises extreme care, one may deal continuously with matters pertaining to the devotional life, to the exclusion of other equally important themes. The master violinist does not play all tunes on one string, and the wise leader will introduce a variety of ideas in his utterances at the week-night service. Some of us are sticklers for keeping record of pastoral activities. The pastor who has never kept a stewardship record will probably face one of the surprises of his life if he follows the plan for one year; he will be astonished to know how circumscribed have been both his thoughts and the Scripture passages used. Why be content with a few drops, when the vast ocean waits to be claimed?

As to the knowledge of plans, programs, and activities of

the denomination, few church members are even slightly informed. It amazes one to find such ignorance among people who, in other fields, are fully alert. How is my church constituted? What is the relation of my church to the denomination of which it is a part? Where and for what are the missionary and benevolence monies of my church disbursed? Is my church based upon worthy historic principles, and if so what are they?

These are some of the areas in which people need enlightenment. Other factors being equal, knowledge and spirituality grow together. The greater the one, the greater the other. In dealing with these factors, the content of the preacher's message will be reasonably well defined. As a rule the minister should be the leader of the meeting and the speaker. It is a shortsighted policy to bring in outside speakers frequently. The pastor is called to be the leader—he should lead. Yet there is one notable exception which we point out: that missionary knowledge and interest may be stimulated.

Many churches include a School of Missions in their annual program. In some places this plan is carried on in an intensive manner, with classes held every night for one week. Probably a majority, however, conduct the school one night each week over a period of six weeks. We believe this latter plan conducive to larger values, especially when the classes are held on the week-night service date.

Following a fellowship dinner which should start at 6:30 the classes will begin at 7:15. There should be four classes: one each for juniors, intermediates, young people, and adults. These classes ought to continue about forty minutes, closing just in time for all to meet in a great assembly gathering, at which the speaker should be an outstanding missionary. If this program is continued for six weeks, a keener and vastly more enthusiastic understanding of missions and mission-

aries will result. On these six nights the witnessing period may well be dispensed with, and the prayer time shortened. At these meetings missionaries can speak with an authority and knowledge that even the most earnest pastor cannot possess.

Enough has been said to show that the need, the season, and the particular occasion will be the elements that should direct the preacher in his selection of the content of the brief but all-important week-night messages.

## Chapter IX

### INSURING A LARGE ATTENDANCE

THE attractiveness of the midweek service is closely connected with the number of people in attendance. "Folks like to go where folks like to go." As a rule, crowds generate enthusiasm. This fact is recognized in all other fields of human endeavor, and people seek to capitalize upon it. It is rather strange, then, that this factor fails to weigh more seriously in the minds of church leaders.

Beyond all question there seems to be a definite relation between the number in attendance and the spiritual blessing received. A crowd intrigues and attracts a larger crowd. Meager numbers testify to the low estimate that people as a whole place on the worth of a gathering. Public endorsement is highly magnetic; lack it, and the people look elsewhere. These statements agree with the clearest psychological findings.

The pastor who says, "Oh, well, numbers don't really count; it's spiritual quality that we seek after," is attempting to "whistle to keep his courage up," and failing. We do not contend that a crowd and only a crowd can make a useful service, but it is true that to have an enthusiastic meeting with only a few of the "faithfuls" present is little less than miraculous. Facts should be faced frankly. The Master put it this way, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

"But is it possible to secure a regularly large attendance upon the midweek service?" comes the normal and persistent question. To scores, yes, to hundreds, of earnest, devoted

pastors this seems an impossibility. The answer, however, is in the affirmative: It is possible to secure a large percentage of the members and friends of the church regularly at the service between Sundays. But this blessed result never happens nor comes by chance. The secret is work, and then more work! Inspiration is necessary, but exhausting preparation is imperative. The effort must, however, be applied in practical ways. There are plans and methods by the use of which this highly desired objective can be reached.

Let it first be said with perfect candor that the service must be planned and conducted in such a manner as to possess genuine worth-whileness. No set of plans will long succeed in gathering an attendance unless the program itself has genuine value. A satisfied customer is always the best possible advertisement. All we say is based upon the assumption that the meeting is so ordered as to stimulate better fellowship and a clearer knowledge of God. This being the case, some of the following plans can be made to work in any parish.

*Secure the Promise of Attendance.* Each member of every Christian church has covenanted faithfully and willingly to maintain the services of his church. The meeting between Sundays is a service of the church. Why not present this matter directly and personally to the members, particularly the officeholders and others who give evidence of devotion? Get their names on "the dotted line."

Secure an ample supply of printed cards—3 by 5 is the best size. The number will of necessity be determined by the membership of the parish, but plenty should be secured. Refuse to skimp here; any savings which might be effected will be of no consequence. Better have a few hundred left

over than to lack a half-dozen. The following is a pledge that the writer used at one time in his ministry:

### MY SACRED PLEDGE

Believing in the peculiar value of the Midweek Service for Christian Fellowship, I promise to attend the Friday night meeting of the Blaney Memorial Baptist Church, Dorchester, Mass., regularly, except when prevented by conditions which make it impossible.

Name .....

Address .....

Date.....

**N. B.**—This promise is not binding unless at least 150 make similar pledges within thirty days.

It is wise to have the "N.B." section printed in red. It should stand out sharply from the other part. We have yet to know of an instance in which this plan—when worked thoroughly—has not been "oversubscribed." Only a good card—fine in quality and printing—should be used. All signed cards are to be filed, and a careful record of attendance maintained. If any signers fail to attend regularly they should be called upon. It will be of value to print the list of those who have "signed up" on the back of the calendar at the outset. Most people enjoy seeing their names in print whether or not they make the admission.

This "signing up" campaign may well get under way at the Sunday services. Pledge cards should be distributed throughout the auditorium. Advance notices through the calendar and verbally by the minister will assist. Quite a number of people will sign the pledge on Sunday, even in the most conservative churches. One can never tell what will be achieved until an effort is put forth.

The pastor will see that a competent committee is named to serve with him in lining up the pledgers. The personnel of this committee must of necessity include only those who are favorable to the proposed effort, and who themselves attend the week-night service. This point is worthy of emphasis. Lukewarm, unenthusiastic people, however good they may be, can never qualify for membership in this group of leaders. We assume, of course, that the pastor has discussed the entire matter with his officials, and won their support. It may require some length of time and the exercise of much pastoral strategy to gain this end, but it can and must be done. Mighty obstacles can be removed from the pathway of progress if the minister is careful to direct by the fine art of indirection!

Surprising results have been achieved by this signing-up plan. Many a defunct week-night service has not only been saved but restored to a place of vital usefulness by this method. It will function in any church, and as well in the city as in the country. Nor does the size of membership limit its effectiveness.

*Enthusiastic Pastoral Invitation Is Important.* This is no plea for fanaticism, but there is a wide *diameter* between a fanatic and an enthusiast. Second only to spirituality in importance is enthusiasm. Emerson well said, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm," while Longfellow put it this way, "Enthusiasm begets enthusiasm," and Phillips Brooks held out this warning, "Let us beware of losing our enthusiasms."

Of course, the preacher will announce the coming week-night meeting at the Sunday services, both from the pulpit and through the calendar. But there are announcements and announcements. We have heard ministers give notice

concerning the midweek service as though the announcement was a bore, and the meeting announced even worse. To get attention, notices must be impregnated with unmistakable zeal and animation. This is an intangible force that someone has called "get up and get," but nothing can contribute more largely toward insuring a uniformly large attendance.

However, this matter of pastoral invitation is not finished when the expected Sunday announcements have been made. Scores of opportunities are presented during the week, each of which should be accepted gratefully. In his parish visitation, the pastor contacts several homes and many people weekly. Every home entered, every person met, constitutes a challenge. Seldom should these golden opportunities to invite the people to attend the week-night service be overlooked.

We have always been impressed with the methods employed by the skillful insurance salesman. He seldom is a bore. That would ruin his sales. Yet, he seizes every opportunity to discuss, or open the way to sell, insurance. This is his key. He does not work on a definite schedule, soliciting for only eight or ten hours each day. All times, all places, and all people are the bounds of his activities. Every such salesman faithfully endeavors to make each prospective customer *insurance conscious*.

With an even higher, nobler motive, the pastor might seek to make each person with whom he talks *midweek meeting conscious!* The man who deeply believes in this meeting between Sundays and says so with enthusiasm can eventually make others believe in it sufficiently to attend.

Where no opportunity is offered naturally, the Kingdom salesman can adroitly make one. In his well-known book, Irving Cobb wrote, "Speaking of operations—you say, just like that, even though nobody present has spoken of them;

and then you are off." This method is suggestive. When an opening is lacking, make one, if wisdom directs.

In a certain theological seminary, the professor of homiletics used to say, "Young gentlemen, it is your business to fill the pulpit; it is the business of the people to fill the pews." Possibly there was an era when this advice was practical, but such is not the case today. If the "pews" at the week-night meeting are filled, the pastor must continuously and personally invite people.

Secure the commitment whenever possible. Remember that "sometime" is no time. When a person invites you to "come over and have dinner with us some night," you don't go, but when that same person says, "Come over for dinner with us on Tuesday night at 6:30," you go. There is no substitute for definiteness. This fact should be registered indelibly on the mind. When a man agrees to attend the midweek service "next Thursday night, at 7:45," the chances are that he will be there. Few people break such a promise.

*Have the People Count Themselves.* This plan is very simple, yet it has proved its real value. Announcement of a large attendance stimulates even larger numbers in the future. Here again is proof that people like to go where people like to go and, conversely, that people do not care to go where people do *not* care to go. A certain pastor announced at the Sunday morning worship that the average weekly attendance at the midweek service in his church during the previous three months had been twelve. Few if any among the hundred people present received any thrill from the bare statement of that confession of failure.

The count should be taken openly each week. Probably the most stimulating way is to have the people count themselves—this assures genuine lay participation. Have the

count start at different places in the room on different nights, but have the people do the numbering. Call some person by name to begin, as, "Mr. Blank, will you be 'one' tonight as we begin our count, and let's continue to the right?" This designated person should be at the end of a pew.

It is surprising how interested people become as the counting proceeds. Many of them remember the attendance at the previous meeting, which may be written on a blackboard located on the platform. Those will be interested in exceeding the count of the last meeting. If the numbers are fewer than before, many will go out and work during the coming days to secure a larger group for the next meeting.

A human-interest touch may be added to this plan by a count of the deacons and deaconesses first. In making this count, a record by name should be kept of these officials. Singularly enough, this perfectly simple device insures the presence of the officials to a remarkable extent. On the other hand, this "checking-up" procedure alone cannot be depended upon to produce such a happy result, yet it has often supplied a needed dynamic.

*Have Special Guests Each Week.* These may be various groups or organizations within the parish. Seldom if ever is it wise to invite other outside organizations to share in the week-night meeting. These may be asked to share in the Sunday worship.

In every church there are various groups—organized classes, women's societies, scouts, choirs, and others—that may be regarded as separate organizations. The larger churches will have many, but even the smaller church will have some distinctive groups. Invite them to be special guests on definite nights each month: Church School Night,

the first week of the month; Scout Night, the second; Choir Night, the third; Women's Groups Night, the fourth; and Church and School Officers' Night, when there are five meetings in the month. This arrangement is not new, but it offers something of variety in combination with other methods.

Wholesome competition will be developed. Each group naturally seeks to secure a large attendance. All groups will be recognized, the pastor asking each one to stand as a unit to be counted. In many instances, it will add interest to have certain of these groups sing a special number. Larger results will be secured from this plan if the hearty support of the heads of the several organizations is gained. At this point the pastor must exercise judgment and tact. Always the specially invited guests will be announced in the calendar and from the pulpit on the Sunday previous to their "Night."

*Make the Midweek Meeting "Church Night."* This has been defined as "the one service where the church membership and constituency are gathered for Christian fellowship, worship, study, and recreation." Many churches have called it "The Food, Faith, and Fun Meeting." It generally consumes three hours, started with the evening meal, then an hour of study and devotion, ending with a period of supervised recreation. The purpose of this gathering, according to Prescott, "is to create Christian fellowship, to interest people in all church activities, to increase attendance on other church services, to develop new talent, and to stimulate a church consciousness on the part of the whole church."

Doubtless every minister is favorable to the achievement of this rich goal. But it must be remembered that this is a heavy program, and requires prodigious effort for continued

maintenance. Most large churches probably can sustain this plan during the winter months, due to their extensive personnel, but a great many small churches may find it impractical. However, if it is really worked, "Church Night" insures splendid attendance and genuine achievement.

*Use Visual Aids.* Allusion was made to these agencies in another connection, but added emphasis is deserved. There is an abundance of splendid stereopticon slides available, while the supply of suitable motion pictures is steadily increasing. These vitalize the thought and ideas which the preacher desires to drive home. Here is an area awaiting a large and blessed discovery. Even the fringe of the possibilities of projection in church service has yet to be entered. Indeed, people may be led to see and feel and worship—and to come back the following week.

Full information concerning these visual-aid materials and equipment can be secured directly from your denominational headquarters. State secretaries are especially anxious to advise regarding possible illumination for missionary activities, and many are in a position to supply the slides and equipment free or at nominal cost.

*Use a Guest Book.* A "live" midweek service will attract visitors, among whom will be many strangers. A committee of two—more will be in the way—should be provided with a guest book; it will be their specific task to secure the signatures, together with the addresses, of all visitors. These guests will be followed up, of course, immediately; during a year many of them can be won to membership in the church. This is one of the most fruitful agencies from which to secure "leads" in building up a Prospect List.

Unusual care should be exercised in the selection of those in charge of the guest book. They must be "regulars" at the

week-night service. If one chances to be ill or otherwise unavoidably detained, the other is ready to serve. But there are other requirements: they *must* know the people—those who are members and those who are not; and they must possess the ability to make happy contact with strangers. We knew of one woman who was asked to sign the guest book, who had been attending that church for nearly forty years. In the parlance of the courtroom, "Ignorance of the law is no excuse." Keepers of the guest book should have a wide acquaintance in the community.

It is difficult to imagine a vital, "going" midweek service without carefully planned advertising. So important is this agency that we shall devote the next chapter to the subject.

## Chapter X

### PUBLICITY THAT PULLS

"If the churches really believe what they preach, why are they not desperate about it?" This question was not asked by either minister, missionary, or even a devoted deacon, but by the editor of a great city newspaper. Habitually endeavoring to achieve desired commercial ends, at the expenditure of long-sustained effort and large sums of money, he could scarcely make himself credit the professed belief of the churches because the members did so little and refused to become desperate about it. This is a serious indictment, since it is often so well founded.

One way by which any church can prove itself in earnest is an intensive, continuous, sane program of publicity for all its work and worship, with a full proportionate share devoted to "the best service of the entire week"—the mid-week meeting. Advertising is imperative. The truth of this is easily seen by even a casual glance at any newspaper or magazine, or by a few moments devoted to the radio. Big business owes much to the publicity that it buys. Not long ago the chief executive of a widely known radio chain gave actual figures of the money paid by various advertisers. The amounts were staggering! It is a case of many millions during a single year. Of course, it pays, or this advertising would stop overnight. "The advertisements in a newspaper," said Beecher years ago, "are more full of knowledge in respect to what is going on in a state or community than the editorial columns are."

What a challenge, then, to the church to advertise! The  
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church is the biggest business in the world. It has the finest "line" for sale, and every person on earth needs what the church and only the church can offer. Too many churches rest in the fond hope that people will come to them. This thinking is futile. The duty of the church, as outlined so plainly by its Head, is to go to the people—"compel them to come." This can be met in part by adequate advertising.

A sane program of publicity is strictly in accord with the spirit of Christ. No mistake should be made at this point. God was the original Advertiser. When he created the stars and swung them into their several orbits, he hung out huge advertisements. Following the flood, he advertised his attitude toward humanity by the great and brilliant bow which he hung across the skies. When the Saviour was born, the angelic messenger and the heavenly choirs publicized the eternal fact.

Away then for all time with the idea that advertising in and of the church is either unethical or unseemly. To hold such an opinion is to be utterly out of step with the inherent genius of the plans of the Lord Jesus. To advertise the church is scriptural, spiritual, and altogether imperative. This is especially true of the week-night meeting.

There are churches which wisely advertise their Sunday worship services but never give a line of publicity to the service between Sundays. In this connection, we are reminded of the words of Jesus to the scribes and Pharisees, "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

It is difficult to conceive of a church maintaining a successful midweek service in this modern age, or in the days which are yet to be, without a comprehensive program of advertising—a plan of publicity that will "pull." Several

generations ago Addison made the following quaint observation: "The great art in writing advertisements is the finding out a proper method to catch the reader's eye; without, a good thing may pass over unobserved, or be lost among commissions of bankrupt." There are many "proper methods," some of which we shall suggest in the paragraphs which follow.

*Pulpit Pronouncements.* Already we have alluded to the minister as a verbal publicist, but an additional word will be quite in order. We place pulpit announcements first because they belong first. The pastor is the key man, first, last, and always. Without enthusiasm, the midweek service holds small promise for the future; it is destined to "fold up" at no distant date.

The pastor must "talk it up" in the pulpit on Sunday. He is trained to be a supersalesman; certainly by attitude and tone of voice he must "boost" the week-night service as zealously from the pulpit as the radio announcer who declares the superior virtues of some product for sale. Radio announcers are always vigorous and enthusiastic about the wares which they happen to be sponsoring. We might learn much by listening critically to them.

*The Weekly Calendar.* In hundreds of calendars collected from churches of many denominations, scattered across the continent, one sees but small space indeed allotted to the week-night gathering. We recognize the fact that many churches make no attempt at such a service; naturally, no mention of it is made in their calendars. But the churches that still carry on some sort of a service between Sundays say very, very little about this activity in the weekly bulletin. It is a mistaken policy, for the calendar can be made a potent force in the constant stimulation of this service.

It is not enough to insert a "weakly," stereotyped notice, such as, "The regular prayer meeting will be held on Thursday night as usual in the Foster Memorial Hall. It is your duty to attend. Welcome." Nothing about such a statement that will attract. It serves no useful purpose. Rather let the notice be fresh, crisp, and bubbling over with information that creates expectancy. The copy should be different in make-up every week. Boost the victories achieved the previous week. Added emphasis can be secured by "boxing" the copy; a frequent change of form and size of the "box" attracts attention. Already we have stated that the midweek meeting directed by the writer is known as *The Glad Service*. As suggestions, we offer three "boxes" from the weekly calendar of his church, that publicized the week-night service.

"The Best Meeting Of The Week!"

**THE GLAD SERVICE**

Thursday Night, 7:45

YOU Can't Afford To Miss It!

YES, SIR!!

Many More Are Going To

**THE GLAD SERVICE**

Next Thursday Night, 7:45

Than Last Week

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*There's a Reason!*

## BRING YOUR BIBLE

And At Least One Other Person To

## THE GLAD SERVICE

On Thursday Night, 7:45

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*We Are Studying Romans*

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Philatheas And Japonicas Special Guests

“Streamers”—single-line announcements reaching entirely across the top or bottom of the page, and printed in bold-faced type—can frequently be used to advantage. Also statements from well-known persons concerning the value of the midweek meeting always serve usefully. Variety in arrangement is indispensable. In a word: Be different!

*The Bulletin Board.* Probably a majority of churches have an outside bulletin board, but few capitalize fully upon its possibilities. This simple device is ready to disseminate valuable information at any time. Happy is the church which accepts the opportunity. Usually an announcement will appear on the board on Friday or Saturday concerning the Sunday services, but after Sunday the board remains bare until the following week end. The minister who is determined to put the service between Sundays “on the map” will use his bulletin board as an able assistant. Sunday announcements will come down on Sunday night, and notices of the week-night meeting will go up.

Loose or separate letters are limited in their usefulness, and wide variety is out of the question. The painted sign

is far better. This permits of wide diversity of color, size, and arrangement of letters. These signs are not to be made by an amateur; a professional sign painter should always be employed. The cost will vary from seventy-five cents to one dollar. We have often seen signs made by sincere but unqualified folks, but, without a single exception, they cast a serious reflection upon the church which they advertised. We offer the following bulletin board signs, which have been actually used to advantage.

Y O U ! !

Will Enjoy Singing The Old Songs At

**THE GLAD SERVICE**

Thursday Night, 7:45

*Bring One and Make Two!*

Y E S , S I R ! !

A Warm Greeting Awaits You At

**THE GLAD SERVICE**

Thursday Night, 7:45

*If You Miss It You Will Miss It!*

## THE BLUES !!

Will Vanish If YOU Come To  
THE GLAD SERVICE

Thursday Night, 7:45

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*A Glad Hand for All Hands!*

These are typical. Every part of the copy should change weekly except the name and time of the meeting. If the signs are rolled up carefully, they can be used again after a few months. This will materially reduce the total cost, although this item should not be permitted to weigh heavily. The increased attendance will offer ways and means to meet any reasonable expense incurred.

*Newspaper Publicity.* The rank and file of newspaper editors will "play the game" with any minister who is actually making news. Churches can and will come into wholesome limelight if they are really doing things, performing a service which benefits humanity. The average midweek meeting cannot fairly be thought of as news—even by the widest stretch of the imagination. But any church, that initiates and maintains a service between Sundays that is alive and moves forward to large and gracious achievement, is making news, and editors will gladly use articles concerning the work.

Brief, bright articles about the midweek meetings, material which savors of realism and human interest—no theory or theology—should be in the hands of the editor early.

These must be clearly typed. The pastor must "hold his tongue" in case a certain write-up is not used, or if it appears in altered form. Newspapermen know what their readers want and publish accordingly. The reporter's rewrite will often leave small resemblance to what the minister wrote—but that is all right.

Frequent reference in the daily press to the success which the Rev. John Blank is achieving in the midweek service will greatly assist in stimulating attendance. People want to go to and share in a *real* week-night meeting. Frequently other ministers will attend such a meeting; they want to know the technique of a week-night service that receives constant mention in the secular press.

Cultivate the friendship of editors. By this, we do not mean anything that faintly approaches patronage. Newspapermen possess wide knowledge. As a rule, they are friendly toward churches and ministers. This friendliness may open new ways to increase attendance upon the midweek meeting.

*Special Post Cards.* The regular government postal card has rather questionable value as a "puller." It is possible, however, to dress it up a little by ingenious effort, but at best its powers to attract are limited. Many, however, of the religious publishing houses today produce beautiful and appropriate cards of invitation for all church services, including the week-night meeting. These sell for about \$1.25 per hundred and are worth the price. This is a most practical way to "boost" the attendance—it will function anywhere.

As an illustration of the "pulling power" of these cards, let me cite a single instance. The attendance at the midweek gathering in this particular church averaged 107 for the

year. The minister was to be absent for a week on a convention trip. Fearing a sharp decrease in numbers in his absence, he had 200 of these cards sent out through the mail. The attendance on the night of the pastor's absence was 147—a lift of exactly forty over the average, and beyond doubt it would have been even larger had not a heavy rain descended at the time of meeting. Any desired information about these cards can be obtained by writing directly to denominational headquarters. This is a matter worth looking into carefully.

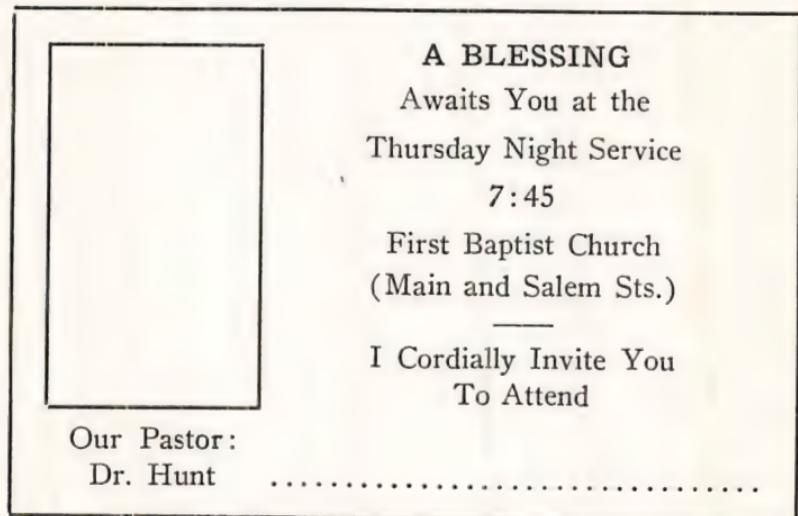
*"Telephone Toilers."* A number of devoted folks, people who believe in and attend the week-night service—say, twenty-five—are each given the names of five people and asked to phone these, inviting them to attend the midweek service. The calls are to be made at least two days before the night of the meeting. On this basis no less than one hundred and twenty-five people will receive a personal invitation. There must be a "Chief Operator"—preferably a woman who can command much of her time—who will have general oversight. Each of these special, personal publicists will be requested to keep an accurate record of people called, when, and the response given. This type of publicity is never automatic in character; a continuous check-up on the "Toilers" will be made, tactfully, by the "Chief Operator."

*Blotters.* This kind of publicity "works"; it has passed the test with flying colors countless times. For church advertising, the blotters should not be large. Coated, two-toned stock adds much to the attractiveness of the setup. Printers usually have a supply of suitable electros, the use of which will not entail extra cost. It is suggested that the pastor will reveal genuine wisdom if he seeks to co-operate with his printer. Pastor and printer, working together, can

make a great team. The printer knows vastly more than any minister about type effects, and the pastor knows about the message he wants "to get across."

Have these blotters printed monthly. Among other items to be included in the copy will be the special nights, the guests, and the pastor's topics for the month. The nights of the midweek service printed in red will help greatly. Two colors necessitate two "runs" by the printer, an added expense, but here again the investment is justified. Refuse to scrimp as to the number printed; be sure to have an adequate supply. Variety must be the watchword.

*Cards of Invitation.* To be most effective, these should be about the size of an ordinary calling card. On one side may appear a thumbnail "cut" of the pastor or church. The copy must be limited. On the bottom should be a dotted line upon which the person presenting the card is to sign his or her name. This makes the invitation personal and more valuable. The following is a suggestive layout:



Rest assured that things will begin to happen in any mid-week service when even as few as fifty devoted people are handing out these cards of invitation wherever they go during the week. God honors this form of endeavor. The writer will long remember the thrill which was his when, several years ago in Washington, D. C., he was handed such a card by a taxi driver. Only the fact that he was compelled to leave the city before the night of the service prevented him from accepting this cordial and perfectly natural invitation.

*Chain Letters.* Generally this method receives unfavorable consideration, doubtless due to its unworthy use in the past; however, there is no reason why it should not be used to advertise the week-night meetings of the church.

The procedure is simple. Select some devoted member of the church, an enthusiastic attendant of the midweek service, and ask him to write to another member or friend, "boosting" this gathering. The one who receives this letter is asked to copy it and send it to three others, with an urgent request that each recipient write to three others. Of course, these letters should be directed to people who are considered good prospects for the midweek gathering. "Doubting Thomases" need only to initiate this plan in order to have their doubts dissipated. Indeed, it can be repeated about four times a year. A new "starter" should be chosen each time the plan is operated. This insures variety of presentation.

*The Blackboard.* This humble bit of equipment can be employed usefully. No financial outlay is involved, since practically every church owns a blackboard. Place the board to one side of the platform on service night. Let the pastor choose some person who can write quickly and clearly. There is almost no limit to the variety of copy that can be

placed upon the board; for instance, the attendance last week, tonight, and that expected next week. Such comparison can be beneficial. Then the special guests due next week may be noted, the preacher's topics for one or more weeks in advance, the old hymns to be sung the following week, or special nights to be observed soon. When making up "the string of scriptural pearls," have each reference written on the board; or when the people state "one thing for which I am grateful," have all these enumerated. These are merely suggested ways in which a blackboard can assist in making the service *go* and *glow* and *grow*. The reader will think of many others.

We have named a few of the many practical ways available to those who would advertise the midweek meeting widely, wisely, and persistently, thereby aiding substantially in maintaining a uniformly large attendance. Nothing has been named that is a mere theory. Every one of these plans can be worked successfully. But it will be remembered that no plan or method can be made to operate by wishful thinking. Nothing less than good, old-fashioned, consecrated labor will produce happy results. There never has been, there is not now, there never will be a substitute for honest labor.

## Chapter XI

### SMALL THINGS OF LARGE MEANING

"It's the little things in life that count," runs an old adage. In his brilliant search for Livingstone through the pitiless wastes of Africa, Stanley's most formidable foes, according to his own testimony, were the Wambutti dwarfs. These diminutive men caused his greatest loss of life and nearly defeated the expedition. Undoubtedly the tradition concerning the loss of a strategic battle because a horseshoe nail was lost is founded upon fact, and it emphasizes the might of small things. Said the ancient wise man, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines." This is life's grim experience—often the greatest losses and failures are occasioned by the "little foxes."

However well and faithfully the major parts of the mid-week program may be planned and worked out, real achievement will not result unless the little things are painstakingly looked after. Let us, therefore, think about some of these very meaningful *little things*.

*Start on Time!* This slogan should be written on the pastor's mind in red-lettered italics. Punctuality is always to be found among the virtues in the top brackets. Someone has said, "Punctuality is the stern virtue of men of business, and the graceful courtesy of princes." Certainly the church should be in the vanguard of those who exemplify this virtue.

If the hour announced for the meeting is 7:30, start at 7:30—not ten seconds later. One does not expect that the entire audience will arrive promptly, but whether few or

many are present—start! Never wait for still others to come. To delay beginning is not only poor taste, but positively injures the meeting, and establishes a wrong precedent. Some people will be late whatever time the service begins; better plan for and make the best of this disagreeable factor. If the minister waits for these people, they in turn will wait still longer for him.

The pastor who starts his service late opens the door wide for various inconveniences. Strange how quickly and keenly people observe. Back in their homes many will tarry a few moments longer with other things, saying, "Oh, well, we do not have to hurry, for the meeting always starts late." The only certain cure is to start at the scheduled moment. If no one is present but the pianist, sexton, and pastor—start! If the pianist and sexton are absent, let the pastor begin alone, but begin! Probably he will be tardy at times. This is a bad example. Unless it is a case of emergency, he should be in his place not only on time but a few minutes early. The exception to this rule is—as previously suggested—*when* the song leader makes his appearance ahead of the pastor.

If the time for closing the meeting is definitely set by a statement such as this, "Our service lasts exactly one hour," close at the time designated. Personally we believe it unwise to state the closing time—there will be occasions when a few extra moments can be used to real advantage. But, if there is an established time set for closing, close at that time. No pastor will ever suffer through keeping faith with his people.

*Have an Abundance of Fresh Air!* There is air enough in the auditorium where the midweek service is conducted, but *fresh* air is frequently entirely lacking. Air is free, but fresh air is at a premium, seemingly. Why this is so often the case, one is at a loss to understand. Musty air affords per-

fect environment in which the devil can work with maximum effectiveness. We do not hesitate in the least to assert that it is impossible to conduct a "live" Christian meeting in a room filled with "dead" air. How dear to the heart of many a sexton is air of "long, long ago!" But no pastor can afford to take the matter of fresh air lightly. Long "restrained, ecclesiastical air" never aids in deepening the spiritual life; it puts the people to sleep, or at least lulls them into a condition of semiconsciousness, physically, mentally, and spiritually. It is hardly less than tragic to have a carefully planned and prayed-for service dissipated by the presence of stale air.

The room should be thoroughly ventilated a short time before the meeting is to start. This rule applies as keenly to winter as to summer. Cold air should never be mistaken for fresh air. The quickest way to warm a chilly room is to open the windows and doors and thereby change the air. Changing the air previous to the start of the service, however, is not enough. One hundred people will devitalize the air in an average-sized auditorium within ten minutes. Of course, this statement does not apply to modern buildings which are equipped with up-to-date ventilating systems. If yours is not such a building, the air must be changed. Have the people stand to sing as the windows are opened. No person will contract a cold while singing lustily!

*Be Sure the Light Is Good!* Semidarkness, with its attendant eyestrain, is never conducive to a useful service. Plenty of good, well-distributed light is a splendid investment. Light means life. God forever says, "Let there be light." Surely that great command must be obeyed at the week-night meeting.

It is safe to assume nearly all of the churches today have

electric lights. The lamps ought to be of sufficient wattage to make reading easy in any part of the room. Indirect lighting affords the best possible results. The bulbs should be changed frequently; this is a money saving practice, anyway. The sexton should be encouraged to have *every* lamp burning brightly. One "black" lamp will detract much from the splendor of the service.

Nor should outside illumination be neglected. The approach to the church ought to be made both easy and attractive. At this point many churches, probably a majority, fail almost to the point of criminal negligence. As a rule, one dim lamp lights (?) the walk leading to the church door on midweek service nights. Such conditions are totally unjustified. How the devil must rejoice as he sees this, and especially when he hears church officials say with heated emphasis, "We must make a saving on our lights; the bill is far too large!"

Not long ago the writer was the guest speaker at a city-wide evening service. All the churches of the city had joined together in sponsoring a great temperance meeting. Considerable money had been spent in advertising; the local papers had "played the service up" well; the united chorus had trained faithfully for days—everything was in readiness for a memorable occasion. Imagine the visiting preacher's dismay when upon approaching the church he saw just one small electric light shining over the entrance, and that red with age.

In contrast was the theatre on the same street but one block away. The playhouse had hundreds of lamps, burning brilliantly, making its entrance as bright as day. No wonder a capacity crowd was at the movies. But why should children of this world be more intelligent than the followers of Christ?

One of the finest possible advertisements—and an investment in keeping with the most sane economy, all things considered—is the use of a floodlight for week-night services. Let people know the church is on the map. Make it easy for folks to come, and difficult for them to stay away. On the steeple of the church served by the writer is a huge star. This is illuminated for the Sunday night worship and also for the week-night service. The church is located at an intersection of streets, and both are thus flooded with light.

*Have Comfortable Seats.* Seats in some churches are as uncomfortable as were the ducking stools of colonial days. The writer recalls the pew of a certain church where he tried hard to worship, but after the first fifteen minutes this seemed impossible, so "painful" were the seats. One could pity the people who regularly attend there. This is no plea, however, for a church full of rocking chairs. This reminds the writer of a week-night service where he spoke not long ago. He was amazed to find a beautiful chapel equipped with rocking chairs! There wasn't a straight-backed chair in the room, save those on the platform. Exactly sixty-eight people attended the service, sixty-six of whom occupied the rockers, while the other two, the pastor and the visiting clergyman, used the pulpit chairs. We do not recommend this kind of equipment, but we do urge that the chairs used be comfortable.

*Flowers Are Helpful.* It is nothing less than remarkable what a basket of flowers can do to a room. We plan for and expect flowers for the Sunday worship—seldom are we disappointed. We know of a goodly number of churches that see to it, by the devoted service of the flower committee, that the chancel is beautified every Sunday with memorial flowers. But how infrequently are flowers seen at the week-

night services! God is the author of beauty. The soul responds to the beautiful. "The soul, by an instinct deeper than reason," says Tuckerman, "ever associates beauty with truth." No wonder Socrates prayed, "I pray, O God, that I may be beautiful within." Hence it is much easier to worship the God of Truth and Beauty amid attractive surroundings. Flowers are one of those "small things" that are potent aids in bringing our souls into closer fellowship with the Eternal.

*Committees Work.* Sometimes we are ready to form just one more organization in the church, the S.S.S.S. (Society for the Suppression of Superfluous Societies). Probably many churches are overorganized, a case of wheels within wheels, and might function more capably if some committees were eliminated. But be that as it may, if our service between Sundays is really to "go," there must be at least four committees. The midweek service is vastly more than a one-man job; the pastor's arms must be upheld by groups of people who are busy intelligently and zealously on different phases of this work. There must be committees on attendance, music, hospitality, and guest book.

1. The Attendance Committee's task is rather clearly defined by the name: to aid the pastor, in all the many ways which have been suggested, in securing a regularly large attendance upon the service. If seven enthusiastic, willing workers can be found, this number may well make up the personnel of this group. Limit the number to three or four if only such are available for the work. Under the minister's direction this group will have oversight of the difficult task of "rounding up" a congregation. If this committee functions acceptably it will be worthy of the pastor's blessing and the united gratitude of the entire church.

2. The responsibilities of the Music Committee have been suggested in detail in Chapter V, "The Service of Song." We shall not repeat.

3. The Greeting Committee is very important. The church of God forms the greatest fraternity the world has ever known. It is a vast brotherhood, with God as the Father of all. Because of this basic fact, the people of any church should stand willing and ready always to extend the hand of greeting and sincere hospitality to all who come to the service. Unfortunately this is not always the case. We have been in churches—even those that have advertised their friendliness—and come away without a person speaking to us or giving any sign of recognition. Ecclesiastical icicles are colder, if possible, than any other variety. Probably this is because we do not expect to find frigidity in the house of the Lord. In any case, the Hospitality Committee, made up of people who are "good mixers," is given the responsibility of making people feel at home the instant they come through the church doors.

Why should the Kiwanians, the Rotarians, and other service clubs exemplify a finer form of cordiality and fellowship than the members of Christian churches? They shouldn't! Members of the Hospitality Committee may also serve as ushers. Can a person be made to feel more uncomfortable than by coming into a church and waiting around to be shown to a seat? If the song service has begun when people arrive, the competent member of this hospitality group will give each person a book, opened to the hymn which is being sung.

4. The duties of the Guest Book Committee have already been clearly outlined. It will be quite in order, however, to suggest that a *real* guest book be purchased—no homemade, unsightly affair. The name of the church should be stamped

in gold letters on the front outside cover. This entails less than a dollar of expense and is worth many times that amount in the atmosphere which is created.

Diligence in the ministry of these "little things" yields high dividends. Neglect of a few things that any church can do may destroy high values. So be sure to take "the little foxes that spoil the vines."

## Chapter XII

### HAVING DONE ALL, WHAT?

"I HAVE planned carefully and worked faithfully, yet our midweek service never achieves any appreciable success. What am I to do?" This declaration and question are heard frequently. As a rule, there can be no doubt as to the sincerity in these cases. Actually, what is one to do when honest effort seemingly has ended in rather dismal failure? There are at least three steps that can be taken.

First, there are certain positive, constructive and encouraging facts to be considered. All too often discouragement warps one's thinking and blinds the vision to great certainties. While a person is depressed, he is very likely to see things as being far worse than they really are. Sacred history records a false conclusion once reached by Elijah the prophet. In great despondency he cried out to God, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant . . . and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." Then came a statement of the facts in God's answer, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." When discouragement would defeat the pastor in this particular phase of his ministry, he should review the objectives of the meeting.

1. It is a service for the glory of God and the extension of his Kingdom. Countless thousands have refused to become discouraged as they have labored to achieve success in fields not to be named in the same category with this ven-

ture. Here is the deepest and truest romance which the heart can know and share. It gilds the most sombre valleys with a brilliancy of color which beggars description; it touches the summit of every obstacle with assurance of ultimate victory. He who works for God has the everlasting promise of the divine Presence, "Lo, I am with you alway." Here is the all-conquering relationship—God and man in continuous co-operation. Of the early disciples we have this testimony, "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."

2. It meets a vital human need. The week-night service is not simply another gathering which, if given up or missed, will make no difference. It has a mission and a message of mounting value. It stirs people as other meetings cannot. It can be definite and dynamic—enrich life, "culture" the soul, and make the heart glad. The experience of twenty centuries has proved emphatically that warm, human fellowship, under religious auspices, is of incalculable worth. The admonition of the writer of Hebrews, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together," is applicable to this and every age.

We can understand how one might become discouraged were he failing to accomplish desired ends in a field of endeavor that sought nothing higher than mere human betterment. It would be easy for such a person to say, "What's the use, anyway?" But this ought never to be true of the service between Sundays, since this agency actually enables every person who attends to become more Godlike and to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This is a fact which can never be lost sight of, nor be out of the pastor's thinking.

Moreover, people deeply *want* what the week-night meet-

ing has to give. "Man is incurably religious," said Sabatier. Since this is true, every person wants and needs the spiritual uplift which the week-night service can be made to generate. Few men are as direct and outspoken as was the Psalmist, but every man frequently feels deep within his own soul, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

3. It is beyond question the most practical and potent time for acquainting people with the rich content of Scriptures and for stimulating the art of soul-winning at home and around the world. Would you have your people constantly becoming more conversant with the great biblical truths? Would you supply them with an adequate and compelling dynamic for winning others to the Lord Jesus Christ and membership in his church? Would you interest them vitally and personally in the romantic task of world evangelization? The midweek gathering is the greatest single agent by which these mighty ends can be attained.

When one feels himself to be even slightly approaching his "slough of despond," he should review these three tremendous facts. To do this will overcome discouragement and furnish the required spiritual impetus by which to move forward. We cannot conceive a finer or more positive panacea for dejection. Those who think things *clear through* will be compelled to cast off every mantle of gloom and go onward.

In the second place, let us face every fact candidly. No man honored with a place in the ministry will permit himself to practice anything which savors of a negative philosophy. The pastor must become a diagnostician in the field of personal effort, plans, programs, and persons. Experience warns him to bury every pet prejudice and all

hastily preconceived ideas. He must refuse to champion any method unless it has more to commend it than a personal like. In the spirit of the scientist, who refuses to allow personal "wishes" to qualify his research or color his findings, the minister must *hew to the line, allowing the chips to fall where they will*. Although primarily spoken for quite another purpose, the words of Jesus seem pertinent here: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Liberty and genuine success find their source and support in truth. Well did Plato observe long ago, "Truth is the beginning of every good thing, both in heaven and on earth."

The competent physician is thorough and painstaking in his diagnosis. He takes nothing for granted. Every part of the body is examined. He studies all symptoms, weighs all evidence, and then comes to a scientific conclusion. Upon these findings, he formulates his prescription. Simple medication or serious surgery may be needed. In any case, he moves forward intelligently to meet a necessity.

The minister will wish to adopt and follow a similar method. This is difficult since he must review, or "diagnose," his own work. However, do this he should; do this he must! It will be helpful if the minister prepare a complete questionnaire, making it as comprehensive as possible. In many instances, the physician is governed in his task of diagnosis by the truthfulness of the answers which the patient gives to his queries. The pastor, too, must be frank with himself. Here are some of the questions which he must ask:

Am I faithful in my attempt to do my part?

Have I planned as wisely as I know?

Have I been thorough in personal preparation?

Has there been too much of ME in the meeting?

Do I talk too long?

Have I expected enough of the people?  
Have I refused to alter plans and methods?  
Have I doubted in my own soul? Why?  
Have I neglected my devotional life? Why?  
Am I deeply concerned about the spiritual well-being of my people?  
Am I big enough to acknowledge my mistakes and willing to correct them?  
Do we have adequate lighting?  
Are our hymnbooks usable for this type of meeting?  
What about the ventilation?  
Do we maintain enough variety?  
Do we start the meeting on time?  
Has the service been sufficiently publicized?  
Has any part of the service received more than its proportionate share of time and emphasis?  
Is the service held on the best night of the week?  
Has the prayer time been made vital?  
Are we challenging youth and children? Why not?  
Have the committees been well chosen, and are they functioning with a good degree of success?

These are practical questions which the earnest pastor will want to answer. His analysis will be cold and dispassionate. He will refuse to dodge any fact, or its implications. With this done, he will generally discover the sources of weakness—those things that have militated against his greater success. The “trial and error” method is still recognized as valid and productive. When trial has proved certain plans and programs unsuited for a given situation, they should be abandoned—immediately.

This is easier said than done. The marked tendency is for the preacher to cling tenaciously to methods which are dear to him or which have worked to advantage in some

other field. Here the scriptural admonition concerning the fruitless fig tree should be followed: "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" Make changes where changes are required, eliminate where that is demanded, and do these things promptly! Remember that the ends are greater and more important than the means.

The third step is expressed in one word: *Persevere!* The world has no place for the person who "grows weary in well doing." "The quitter never wins and the winner never quits!" Lincoln sustained at least eight major political defeats before emerging upon his victorious career. The Wright brothers, early pioneers in man's attempt to master the airways, met repeated disappointment but refused to yield to what the finest science of that day declared "an utter impossibility." Helen Keller, against whom, apparently, fate had hurled its most herculean thrusts, defied every suggestion of defeat. Glenn Cunningham, one of the most brilliant athletes of American history, through dauntless determination overcame what medical science pronounced an incurable, crippling physical handicap.

Perseverance ultimately proves irresistible. "No rock is so hard," said Tennyson, "but that a wave may beat admission in a thousand years." Great attainments in any field are wrought more through dogged persistence than by any other force or combination of forces. The man who refuses to be beaten will not be beaten. "The conditions of conquest are easy," someone has said; "we have but to toil awhile, endure awhile, believe always, and never turn back." The satisfying fruits of toil come only as the efforts are watered with continued perseverance.

Genuine courage is comparable to a kite that mounts high upon a contrary wind, and the greater the obstacles the more

glowing the success attained. To lose courage—the source and inspiration of perseverance—is to experience one of life's great tragedies. Christian courage is of God. He waits to give freely and willingly at all times; but day by day we must wait upon him that our strength may be renewed. This done, there will be nothing impossible. Only those who are afraid fail.

If the service is not achieving expected results, let the pastor do these three things: Review the glorious objectives of the meeting; face all facts and be ready to revise methods; persevere. These things faithfully done, the week-night meeting will prove a benediction to steadily increasing numbers. This can be done! It should be done! Dare we do less at a time like this?